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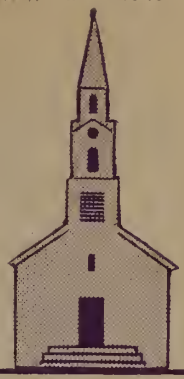

Women in American Church Life

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BY INEZ M. CAVERT

A STUDY PREPARED UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF A COUNSELING COMMITTEE OF WOMEN REPRESENTING NATIONAL INTERDENOMINATIONAL AGENCIES

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Foreword

THE Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America has had great satisfaction in its part in the world-wide study, undertaken by the World Council of Churches, of the "Life and Work of Women in the Church." The intensive inquiry into the American phase of this subject is the most comprehensive ever undertaken in the country.

The Federal Council's interest in this project is twofold. In the first place, it profoundly desires to raise the level of leadership within the church by encouraging Christians of outstanding abilities, irrespective of sex, to make their fullest contribution to the church. In the second place, the council is coming to know, through experience, the great benefits accruing from the cooperation of men and women in the work of the church.

The council is well aware that on the whole the Christian movement has not made the fullest possible use of the powers and skills of devoted women and therefore commends to the churches and all interested persons the thoughtful consideration of the picture of women and their present and possible service in the church as set forth in this pamphlet.

CHARLES P. TAFT

Cincinnati, Ohio
November 15, 1948

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Introduction

ARE women making their full and distinctive contribution to the life and work of the churches? This report offers the following data on this question: the kinds of activities undertaken in local organizations of church women; the extent to which women share in the work of the governing bodies of the churches—local and national; the attitudes of women on their life and work in the churches.

The emphasis of this report is on the responsibilities of women in the churches, not on their "rights." The sponsoring committee hopes that readers of this material will see, between the lines, a new blueprint of the church of the future, in which the contribution of women will be considered not "women's work," but as stuff and substance of the whole life and work of the church as a commonwealth of Christian men and women.

Study of this subject is not new to the American churches. In 1927 a report on *The Relative Status of Women in the Church* was issued after long and careful study by a Joint Committee representing the Council of Women for Home Missions, the Federation of Women's Boards of Foreign Missions and the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. In 1940 the Federal Council's Department of Research and Education published, at the request of the Women's Cooperating Commission of the Council, "Women's Status in Protestant Churches" (*Information Service*, November 16, 1940). This latter study was primarily concerned with the consideration of women on governing boards of the church—national, regional, and local—in a small but representative group of denominations.

"Women in American Church Life" was prepared as a contribution to the Study of the Life and Work of Women in the Church, conducted by the Study Department of the World Council of Churches. Reports were secured from fifty countries. Out of consideration of this worldwide study, the First Assembly of the World Council, meeting at Amsterdam, Holland, in 1948, recommended that more women be chosen to serve on the commissions, committees, and the Secretariat of the World Council, and that a commission of men and women be appointed for further study.

INTRODUCTION

Responsibility for guiding the preparation of "Women in American Church Life" has been taken by a counseling committee of women representing national interdenominational agencies, as follows:

Foreign Missions Conference of North America
Mrs. Albert Beebee
Miss Sue Weddell

Home Missions Council
Miss Edith E. Lowry
Miss Emma Jessie Ogg

United Council of Church Women
Miss Mabel Head
Miss Marion L. Norris
Mrs. Ruth M. Worrell

American Committee for the World Council of Churches
Mrs. Henry Hill Pierce

Federal Council
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Miss Inez M. Cavert of the Federal Council's Department of Research and Education assembled the material and prepared the report.

RHODA E. MCCULLOCH
Chairman

PART I

How People Feel about the Place of Women in the Church and Why

I. HOW WOMEN FEEL ABOUT IT

How do church people feel about this question of the place of women in the life and work of the church? So far as one can judge from what they say about it, very much as they do about women's share in civic and economic life. Some are anxious to see women take part in all such activities; others are more doubtful or definitely convinced that women should play a subordinate role to men.

The tradition that "women should keep silence in the churches" is still strong in some denominations—though, almost certainly, far less than a generation ago. Other important factors are closely intertwined with certain basic attitudes on the "women's rights" movement and the tensions within the secular world over such questions. Where one thread begins and the other ends, no one can say. That Christ's teachings gave women a new place in the world cannot be doubted, nor that Christian missions have been very important in the emancipation of women in the countries of the younger churches.

Tradition itself is an important factor. The underlying objection to a woman's serving or administering the Lord's Supper and to the woman minister seems to be the age-old tradition that the performance of religious rites is reserved for men. (Friends, it should be noted, have no such rite as the Lord's Supper.) That this attitude is very strong, even in some of the most liberal church bodies and among the most "advanced" women, is clear beyond a doubt. Yet "the priesthood of all believers" is a basic Protestant doctrine. The idea that membership on boards of trustees in charge of church property is naturally reserved "for men only" dies hard in spite of the fact that the business world is

quite used to the woman who not only handles her own property but takes major responsibility for spending the family income.

However, there are still other basic factors in the problem. There is a very real concern on the part of church women in all the denominations covered in our study lest women take so much responsibility for church affairs that men will lose all interest. Some women say that the official board is "the only men's club in the church"; therefore, it would never do to give women any responsibility there. That the function of the official board is something very different seems not to enter into the picture for them.

Several recent opinion studies on women in America and a sampling of officers of women's organizations in local churches of 19 denominations in the American Committee for the World Council of Churches and two others closely related to it, made in 1946-1947 for this study, reveal similar attitudes.

Almost half the women, but just under a third of the men, questioned in the *Fortune* opinion poll (published in that magazine for August and September, 1946) thought that women are better than men at handling details. Half the men thought men are better at reaching decisions. "I want women on my board of trustees," said a prominent Congregational minister. "They are more practical." But another well known minister of the same denomination is willing to see women serve almost anywhere except on the board of his church. "Then things don't get done," he complained. "Our pastor has expressed the need" to have women serve on the board, reported a Lutheran Augustana Synod woman, replying to our questionnaire. "We think women on these boards are more specific than men. Once the board votes to pass some new project there is no rest for them until it is completed," said a United Brethren woman. The church is "run on a more efficient basis when women are on governing boards," a Congregational woman thought. The *Fortune* poll found that professional men and executives were particularly likely to think women good at details but not at more responsible tasks. "Quite often we have a pastor who is prejudiced against women serving on official boards," a Methodist woman commented. Some women from other denominations expressed the same feeling to us.

More than half the women in the *Fortune* poll thought women were more ready to accept new ideas. In our inquiry, a United Brethren

woman said they were trying to get some of the men "out of old ruts." "Women are willing to try new methods, hence the work is more progressive," a Methodist said. "The men in our church just like one old method," complained a National Baptist. "Women seem to have more 'dare,' " an Augustana Lutheran Synod woman thought.

For the most part, nevertheless, the *Fortune* survey showed that men and women "agree more often than not in their appraisal of their own and the opposite sex." Similarly, "our church is of the opinion that capable women should serve wherever they are fitted" to do so, said a Church of the Brethren woman. "If a woman is qualified to hold an office, she is readily elected," a Seventh Day Baptist woman commented. "There have never been any restrictions as to sex for those serving our church in any capacity," wrote an Evangelical and Reformed woman. But another woman from the same denomination in the same city said that "The prevailing opinion of the church council is that women would disrupt their exceptional spirit of good fellowship." Such opposition, however, is not encountered only among men. Women often hesitate to break with tradition or they may be unwilling to elect a woman because of petty jealousies. "We are pushing our women ahead as fast as they are willing to go," a prominent United Lutheran minister thought. "We can find no woman who is willing to serve," a Presbyterian, U.S.A., (North) woman said regretfully. In such situations much depends on the individuals involved. Clashing personalities or an unfortunate choice of leaders in a single case may complicate the situation in any church long after an immediate incident is over.

There seems to be one striking difference in the position of American women in the church and in civic life in general. By and large, in church life women's participation in governing bodies is likely to begin with token representation on national boards or committees. Gradually, this participation is extended to local church committees and then to boards. For instance, women have served on national boards of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. (South) since 1924. They serve on committees in local churches but cannot be elders or deacons. Membership on the national boards of the Congregational Christian Churches and in the biennial meeting of the General Council must be one third women. But local Congregational churches seldom give that much place to women unless they lack qualified men.

In civic life, however, women are most active at the lower rungs of

the ladder; "they do 80 per cent of the election district work."[1] In 1946 there were 218 women members of the lower houses of state legislatures, but only nine representatives in Congress.[2]

There is today in this country in some groups a strong tide of feminism evidenced in the desire of many women to keep the wartime gains that made it possible for women to enter types of work heretofore closed to their sex. There is an equally apparent strong tide of anti-feminism that sometimes goes so far as to blame women for most of the world's ills.

A survey of the opinion of "a fair cross section of the leaders of thought" in this country by Edward L. Bernays published in the June and July, 1946, issues of *McCall's Magazine* revealed the following consensus:

"(1) That because of her intelligence and natural abilities, woman is the equal of man in nearly every field of human endeavor.

"(2) That because of ancient prejudices, ancient laws, woman suffers from a blighting discrimination in nearly every field of human endeavor."

"Many thousands of women," Mr. Bernays found, "regard these circumstances with no misgivings whatever." But such women, he commented, close their eyes to the fact that many women are "thwarted in their efforts to use their brains and even to earn a simple and secure living." Furthermore, if the "almost overwhelming" problems of the world are to be met adequately, the "minds and the emotional characteristics, the special moralities and special thought processes of women are very seriously needed."

Likewise, the world needs desperately to regain a feeling of the reality and unity of Christendom. This, too, is possible only if all available spiritual forces are used to the utmost; it cannot be done by one sex any more than it can be done by any one of the historic branches of the church universal.

There is "no sex distinction in good citizenship," according to Helen C. White, president of the American Association of University Women. Rather, there are "certain values with which women more often and

[1] "It's a Man's Game but Woman Is Learning." By Paul H. Dougherty. *New York Times Magazine,* November 3, 1946.

[2] "Participation of Women in Government." By Florence E. Allen. *Annals of the American Academy,* May, 1947, p. 95.

more generally have occasion to be preoccupied than men. . . . Women are concerned not only with order and efficiency but with health and grace of living. For them the desirable community is not only a place where people can make a good livelihood but a place where people can be stimulated and helped to attain a good life." Women's capacities for "the personal, the particular, the detail of the moment" without losing sight of the "exigencies of the long-term pull" are "just the talents that are needed in our community life today."[3]

This is recognized by many church women, too. "Women are thinking in terms of the world today, of those that have gone astray, and the youth problem," wrote an African Methodist Episcopal woman. Church and parsonage are better cared for when women are on the board of trustees, because women are more concerned about such things, is the feeling of women in different denominations. "We need the balance which comes from the process of thinking things through as *men and women*," said an Evangelical and Reformed woman. "Women look at things from a little different angle," so it takes men and women "working together to build a well rounded church program," according to a United Brethren woman. "Mixed opinions from both men and women contribute far more to the life and welfare of the church than from men alone—or women alone," a Disciple woman found. Another Disciple woman reported: "Church leaders are becoming more missionary-minded since most of the women serving on boards are members of the missionary society. . . . The vision of the church as a whole is broadening. . . . There is less friction and much more tolerance."

The Attitude of Women toward Their Own Societies

A very large part of women's work in nearly all denominations is carried on in their own organizations. This is very important for the whole church. The questionnaire already referred to asked the respondents to comment on developments in their own churches and to state their opinions.

Perhaps the most striking thing brought out in regard to the work of the women's organizations is the response from small churches of different denominations that may be summed up in the following statement from a National Baptist reply: ". . . Many of the small churches

[3] "Women and the Community." By Helen C. White. *Annals of the American Academy*, Vol. 251, May, 1947, pp. 138, 139.

would be extinguished if it were not for the . . . women that carry on sacrificially." Without the women members, said a Seventh Day Baptist in the same vein, "the church would be decadent, not to say *dead*." What it sometimes means in actual practice is made vivid by a Congregational reply from the West: "When we have no minister the women usually hold the services. . . . The women even hauled all the stones used in building the basement of the church, and do all the janitor work except making fires." From a tiny Episcopal church in the Middle West with fewer than fifteen active members in the women's auxiliary: "We have paid off the mortgage, buy the fuel, pay for lights, Sunday school, and any other expenses asked of us by the vestry. . . . We trimmed the church for Christmas and held services both for children and adults without benefit of a clergyman."

Women's societies have helped many women to develop a new interest in the wider outreach of the church. From a United Lutheran church in the South: "We have taken the lead among ourselves and among our fellows to try to educate our church people to a better understanding of the world and the world church." A Lutheran Augustana Synod correspondent noted that women "express themselves more freely" at the annual business meeting of the congregation as time goes on. . . . "This has been brought about since the women conduct their own meetings in the different organizations, when in times past the pastor was president." The great majority of the women replying to our questionnaire, however, belong to denominations in which the women's associations have long been in their own hands.

An Episcopalian from the South found that "each year" the women's "effective influence" in church matters is "increasing." Another from Pennsylvania thought that "women increasingly active in civic affairs are relating these to the churches' program with widening horizon of vision and active interest."

What a well functioning women's organization can do for a church was described in a comment from an Evangelical and Reformed church where, a few years ago, women took no part at all except Sunday school teaching. Though some men still do not allow their wives to attend guild meetings, there is "a keener appreciation of how the other half of the world lives. There has been a marked improvement in the benevolent program" of the church "due to a better understanding on the part of the women through the women's guild." The president of a

synodical women's guild in the same denomination reported: "Churches with progressive women's guilds have the best and most currently informed adult membership."

In most churches where a single association representing all women's interests has been formed it seems to have been satisfactory, judging from our correspondents. Now and then a woman commented that missionary interests are neglected and social interests overstressed, but many more found that it has meant "enlarged missionary vision." Often it has meant a greater interest on the part of the women as a whole and a more unified approach to the total church program. From a Brethren church came the comment: "The women . . . discuss church problems as they see them, then formulate plans which are taken to the pastor's council. . . . Not many things are done unless the women push it."

Some churches have a great variety of women's organizations. From a Presbyterian, U.S.A., church with a ladies' association divided into nine circles, a missionary society, and four other organizations: "It is hard to find a complete set of officers for so many different groups—so we have staggered the elections, one half this year and next year the other half." An Augustana Synod Lutheran woman said that her church has "four important women's organizations. . . . When one belongs to three of them . . . there is not much time for more activity."

A United Presbyterian noted that the women of her group had expressed the feeling that, "It should not be necessary for them to earn money to supply equipment." It "should be provided from the church budget."

When Men and Women Work Together

Clearly some women prefer to work only with other women, some would rather work with men, still others want to do some things as women with other women but also want to do other things in mixed groups. The overwhelming majority of the women replying to our questionnaire who had served with men on church boards found it worth while. A few thought it was worth while though sometimes disappointing. Only a very tiny minority had found it consistently disappointing.

This questionnaire included the following opinion scale: I. "Running the church is a man's job"; II. "Women may serve on the less important boards but not on the more important"; III. "Exceptionally

able women should have the opportunity to serve on any board for which they are fitted"; IV. "All boards should include some women."

The letter accompanying the questionnaire asked the respondents to consult the women of their local society in filling it out. It was evident from the comments that this was done in many cases. Sixteen of the twenty-one denominations returned a very unusual proportion of filled-in replies for the opinion scale, ranging from about 4 per cent of all churches for Reformed in America and Protestant Episcopal to 15 per cent from the Evangelical and Reformed.[4]

Naturally, the women of the three most conservative bodies—Reformed in America, Presbyterian, U.S., and Lutheran Augustana Synod—gave by far the largest vote for "running the church is a man's job" and in the order that might be expected. But the majority vote was divided between giving the exceptionally able women the right to serve on any board and the belief that every board should include some women. Women do not serve on the major boards of local churches in those denominations, except, extremely rarely, as trustees in Presbyterian, U.S. churches. Neither the Presbyterian, U.S.A., the United Lutheran, nor the Protestant Episcopal women cast a majority vote for any one position. For the first two the total vote for points III and IV combined was about 90 per cent, with Lutherans stressing point III more heavily, and the Presbyterians point IV. The Episcopalian vote for point IV was almost identical with that of the United Lutheran, but they were less interested in point III. Their total vote for III and IV was a trifle higher than that of the Episcopalian auxiliary's triennial meeting in 1946 asking the General Convention to rule that "layman" should be interpreted to include women. The following is the order in rank of the bodies that approved point IV by a majority: Friends, A. M. E. Zion, National Baptist, A. M. E., Methodist, National Baptist, Inc., Disciples of Christ, Congregational Christian, Colored M. E., United Brethren, Northern Baptist, Church of the Brethren, and Evangelical and Reformed. The order here is, in large part, nearly the same as that for the proportion of churches with women on the boards.

The questionnaire went, of course, to leaders in their respective societies—not to the rank-and-file. Often they reported a divided opinion among the women. The overwhelming vote to give women at least

[4] For a few denominations the number of replies was too small to be regarded as statistically accurate.

REPLIES TO OPINION SCALE

Denomination	I	II	III	IV
	%	%	%	%
BAPTIST				
Northern	0.5	1.7	29.0	68.8
National	0	0	12.5	87.5
National, Inc.	0	8.0	14.6	77.3
Seventh Day	0	6.2	50.0	43.7
BRETHREN, CHURCH OF	0	0	34.9	65.0
CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN	0.3	1.3	25.0	73.4
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST	3.0	2.4	18.1	76.5
EVANGELICAL & REFORMED	2.3	1.6	39.3	56.8
EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN[1]	0.6	0.6	27.4	71.2
FRIENDS	0	0	8.5	91.4
LUTHERAN				
United Lutheran Church	3.7	5.6	47.1	43.6
Augustana Synod	21.6	14.4	31.2	32.8
METHODIST				
The Methodist Church	0.07	0.4	17.6	81.0
African Methodist Episcopal	0	0	12.9	87.0
African Methodist Episcopal Zion	0	0	9.0	90.9
Colored Methodist Episcopal	0	0	28.5	71.4
PRESBYTERIAN				
U. S.	21.7	15.3	37.6	25.3
U. S. A.	6.0	5.1	41.5	47.4
United	5.2	14.0	57.8	22.8
PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL	16.5	10.5	28.8	44.2
REFORMED IN AMERICA	26.6	13.3	36.6	23.3

[1] Because the questionnaire study came just at the time of the merger of the Evangelical Church and the United Brethren, questionnaires were circulated only to the women of the former United Brethren.

the *right* to share in church governing bodies does not mean that they want to take them over. It was very unusual indeed for a woman to say that the proportion of women in church governing bodies should be in line with their number in the church. Far more often they were concerned lest women take over so much that the men would feel no need to be active. This seemed to be the reason for a vote for points I or II much more often than the feeling that it was "un-Biblical." Every denomination—even the Friends—had at least some replies that expressed fear over the former point. Yet it is striking that the women in the churches with legal sex equality were much less worried about it than those in which such participation is still either forbidden or decidedly unusual. Some of the former commented: "We don't seem to think much about sex but about the person fitted for the job." Many women are irked—though some are not—by the assumption that the man with but few qualifications for leadership is *ipso facto* better fitted than the most able woman. Especially in the most conservative denominations some women checked both points I and III. They preferred church boards made up of men but thought that a woman should be eligible if male leadership was weak. A number reported that the men were taking more interest in the work of the church since women have been serving on the boards.

In the denominations that give women the greatest freedom it is probable that women serve more often as deacons or trustees in small rural churches than in large city ones. (It was not possible to make this comparison in our analysis.) One difficulty is the fact that in rural districts fewer women have had business experience or handle the family purse than in cities. Women in different denominations in rural areas noted that "the board" had to make the repairs on the church—therefore, women should not serve. A Methodist commented, however, that "I cannot paint the church steeple, but I can know who can do it best." Women may serve as church treasurers or financial secretaries in churches where they are not eligible to board membership. In that case they may attend the meetings but do not vote. One woman noted that in choosing a church treasurer they were careful to select one with a capable wife. Then they could feel confident that the church books would be well kept.

The women do not think that "a woman" is all that is needed. Indeed, to fill all the qualifications suggested she would have to be a para-

gon!—not over-aggressive, nor yet afraid to speak up, cooperative, tactful, capable, able (and willing) to present the women's point of view to the board and its problems to the women's organization, free from petty jealousy, not eager for power and prestige. Where women have served unsuccessfully in the past, it is likely to be considered proof positive by the local church that women cannot do the job. Methodist stewards are elected on the nomination of the pastor—which puts great responsibility on him to choose able persons. Some complained that the women chosen are those with means but without business experience. The younger trained women, the complaint was, are likely to be passed over. Some churches in different denominations reported that married couples serve as committees very successfully—others that this would never do. Some felt that women cannot help on financial appeals, others have found that married couples make the most successful type of every-member canvassers. One great difficulty that is encountered in attempting changes in many churches is the custom of electing board members for life. If most of them are elderly, it may be very difficult to get any new points of view introduced.

Negro women responded in the same vein as white women. "All are one," both men and women, seemed to be the general attitude, whether the respondent was white or Negro, highly educated or with but little formal training. Women in different denominations implemented it differently, depending in part on their personal experience and in part on their social and religious background, but the evidence is clear that the basic attitudes are similar.

Even where women cannot be members of major boards they are playing a more important part than a few years ago. They serve on the building committee, on the pastoral relations committee, on the committee for choosing a new pastor. Southern Presbyterian women are likely to report that men and women work together happily on committees. The thing that rouses most difficulty, of course, is to have the men spend the money the women have raised without consulting them—even if they feel it was reasonably well handled.

It was not possible to get any similar sampling of men's opinions, unfortunately. It is evident that *some* men, both laymen and ministers, are beginning to feel the need of women on the boards. In some cases the minister would like to include them, the women thought. In other cases the men would, but the minister opposes it. An Evangelical and Re-

formed woman thought there were women on the board where the minister was under fifty.

It is evident that in every denomination there is some realization of the need to get the women's point of view. Sometimes there is an advisory group of women who meet with the board without the right to vote. Some replies from the Reformed Church in America and the Augustana Synod reported regular joint meetings of the board with their wives. Brethren churches sometimes make the wives of the deacons also deacons. The comment of one woman that this did not necessarily fit them for the office probably represents the attitude of many others. Plans to organize a parish council or discussion of it were reported from different denominations. Some women reported that a council had helped to integrate the church but had been discontinued. No such plan will work, of course, without the cooperation of the pastor, the board, and the representatives of all the organizations. If, for instance, the president of the women's organization thinks that some women's meeting—scheduled by mistake for the same night as the official board—is more important than the board meeting, then her formal membership will not help much. Nor will it if she is expected to be only a listener.

Sex Competition or Cooperation?

Probably the two most important factors that make it difficult for men and women to work together on church boards are, first, the tradition of the subordination of women and, second, fear of sex competition. Some women become over-aggressive in their resentment of that tradition and are very irritating to others of both sexes. It may be difficult for them to avoid taking an ordinary disagreement as personally directed at them. Other women have accepted the subordinate role of women so completely that it is difficult, if not impossible, for them to "pull their oar" in a mixed meeting. At the same time, some men in all types of activity resent the presence of women in anything but subordinate roles. This is due in part, at least, to their dread of sex competition. Such an attitude, of course, is by no means limited to the church.

Margaret Mead's comment in this connection some years ago is to the point here. She urged women to seek to develop a world in which "women would be asked to play a role complementary to that of men instead of competitive with it. . . . We would recognize that women have two jobs, the private job of bringing up men who are so secure . . .

that they need never think of or fear competition of women, and the public job of making a steadily growing place in the world . . . in which the gifted woman is free to contribute to society without her position being invidious."[5]

There are other reasons why men and women may work together in the church to make it stronger and more truly Christian than it can otherwise be. In the home man and woman are complementary on a biological basis. In civic life the relationship tends to be mutual. In the church at its best the relationship is both mutual and reciprocal. Both sexes are concerned for the things of the spirit that the church is seeking to further. They may come to the question of the desirability of observing some special day like World Communion Sunday, for instance, with a somewhat different background, but, even so, a basically mutual concern. But the official boards of the church can, it is evident from the experience of many churches, develop a new degree of unity if the board as a whole is informed about the concerns of the women's organization on important matters facing the entire church, and if women are more familiar with *all* the major problems the trustees and other official boards must face. If the women know little or nothing of the financial situation of the church except as they are asked to meet an urgent need; if their total awareness of the needs of other organizations within the church is haphazard; if the men on the official boards know nothing of missions except that it is "women's work"; if their understanding of the work of the women's organization comes solely through their own wives—how can such a church be truly unified in its effort to further the kingdom of God on earth?

2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE QUESTION

Some groups are convinced that it is "un-Biblical" for women to take any part in the government of the church. Yet others—by far the larger part of the denominations under consideration in this study—do not consider that this is true, at least insofar as service on lay boards is concerned. Some of the latter, however, still feel that the prohibition holds for the ministry.

[5] "A New Role for Women." *Woman's Press,* November, 1940.

The Biblical Bases

A careful analysis of the Biblical bases for the work of women in the church was made for this study by Cleo Mitchell Espy, a graduate of Yale Divinity School. The following materials are taken from her (unpublished) manuscript. In the Creation story man and woman were both made "in the image of God." Many expositors feel that this story proves the equality of the sexes. Others argue that the disobedience of Adam and Eve indicates the subordination of women. The Hebrew codes show that women participated fully in the worship of Yahweh. Though women were under some ritualistic disabilities, particularly in the later codes, in other personal matters they were on an equal footing with men. ". . . Women's influence in religion was reckoned with in all periods."[6] Psalms 68:11 reads "The Lord giveth the word: The women that publish the tidings are a great host."[7]

In the period between the Old and the New Testament the Israelites had close relationships with heathen nations. In this period oral law was developed to meet the needs of the people at that time. As a result, women were circumscribed in their religious privileges, domestic and social relationships, and crowded as near the border-line of the sex-degradation of the surrounding countries as a "perversion of the Mosaic law would tolerate."[8]

Such was the situation when Jesus entered upon His public ministry. It is to His attitudes, teachings, and principles as the guide that Christian actions and policies need to look for direction and authority. He found woman as "the *creature* of her . . . relationships"—and He treated her as "a *person* with relationships."[9] He practised the principle of equality of the sexes in spiritual matters and privileges.

"Against the testimony of every age, every race, every faith, He lifted His serene and quiet assurance that male and female were alike human, alike made in the image of God."[10]

[6] *The Position of Women as Reflected in Semitic Codes of Law.* By Elizabeth Mary MacDonald. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1931, pp. 66-69.

[7] All Biblical texts are from the American Standard Version.

[8] *The Bible Status of Women.* By Lee Anna Starr. New York, Fleming H. Revell Co., 1926, p. 165.

[9] *The Attitude of Jesus Toward Woman.* By M. Madeline Southard. New York, George H. Doran Co., 1927, p. 172.

[10] *The Church and Woman.* By A. Maude Royden. The Living Church Series. London, James Clarke & Co., Ltd., p. 182.

Throughout His ministry, women were responsive to His teachings and devoted to His Person—even to being the last at the Cross and the first at the empty tomb. "There is not one syllable in His recorded teaching which hints at the exclusion of women from any ministry which men might render to Him."[11]

After the Ascension, the apostles returned to the upper chamber in Jerusalem and "these all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren" (*Acts* 1:14). This "multitude of persons gathered together about a hundred and twenty" (*Acts* 1:15) awaited the promised power. "And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with the other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (*Acts* 2:1-4). In Peter's discourse on this occasion, he refers to Joel's prophecy (*Joel* 2:28, 29: "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy") as being fulfilled.

It seems that neither oral law nor Jewish custom forbade the prophetic work of women. There is mention that in the days of Christ, "Anna, a prophetess . . . departed not from the Temple, worshiping with fastings and supplications night and day" (*Luke* 2:36, 37).

"Prophecy was a common practice in the early church. Several examples are given in the *Book of Acts*":[12] *Acts* 11:27 ff; 13:1; 15:32; 21:9 (Philip's four daughters), and *I Corinthians* 11:5; 12:10 refer to it as a usual practice. According to Dr. Starr's statement in *The Bible Status of Women,* at Pentecost, "These women were empowered to proclaim the gospel, not only to Christ's followers—the church—but also to unbelievers—to the great unsaved multitudes. . . . Never in the history of the Christian church did woman hold such high position or take such a prominent part in the propagation of the gospel as in the Apostolic age."[13] The significant place seems clear from the evidence in the

[11] *Some Questions and Answers Concerning Women and the Priesthood.* By E. Louie Acres. London, H. R. Allenson, Ltd., 1932, p. 20.

[12] *An Outline of Biblical Theology.* By Millar Burrows. Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1946, p. 256.

[13] Starr, *op. cit.,* pp. 181, 206.

Book of Acts and in the Epistles, and "certain women seem to have been singled out for special duties by special fitness."[14]

The equality of the sexes was accepted by Jesus since He treated women as having the same rights, responsibilities, and potentialities as men. And this principle was generally held in *Galatians* 3:28: "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female: for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus." Other sayings of Paul, however, have been "the storm center in every controversy over the domestic and ecclesiastical status of woman . . . for nineteen centuries."[15] Even though recognizing in women spiritual capacities of exactly the same kind as men, Paul, as a Jew and a Roman citizen, "was not inclined to leave entirely free scope to the exercise of their faculties, lest it should conflict with ancestral usage and with good order. He held to the general inferiority of women, but was ready to recognize and to use their zeal and ability in Christian work."[16]

This conception of spiritual equality did not seem to preclude a difference of function and service by men and women.

Most of Paul's admonitions, as well as those of other New Testament writers, are addressed to women as wives, and seem applicable only, or chiefly, to marriage and home relationships.

The most frequently quoted passages in connection with the status and function of women in the church are *I Corinthians* 11:5-15; *I Corinthians* 14:34, 35, and *I Timothy* 2:12. The first Christians were Jewish, and these women had a freedom surpassing that of contemporary cultures. Much of Paul's writing was to Gentile women suddenly freed by Christianity from a morally depraved pagan society. In the church at Corinth difficult problems and disorders had arisen out of this background of moral delinquencies and undisciplined conduct. In *I Corinthians* 11:5-15 Paul addressed himself to a regulation of the public worship of women. In the interests of orderly worship, it was well to settle Christian practices for Jewish and Gentile members grown up with diverse customs. He appealed to Creation, the order of nature, and general custom to add strength to his admonition. This all is a part of his thesis that "the head of the woman is the man" and the wearing of the veil was a sign of this subordination.

[14] *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge.* Samuel Macauley Jackson, Editor-in-chief. New York, Funk and Wagnalls Co., Vol. XII, p. 413.

[15] Starr, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

[16] *The Ministry of Women.* Appendix II "St. Paul and Women." By Alice Gardner, p. 52.

Commentators differ on the meaning and importance of *I Corinthians* 14:34, 35. Some are convinced that this meant that women were to be in subjection; others feel that the situation in the local church at Corinth was the important thing in Paul's mind and that he "never vetoed a devout woman from exercising, even at public worship, the prophetic gift." But he did disapprove of "the practice of matrons participating in discussions or interpretation of what had been said by the prophet or preacher during the service."[17]

I Timothy 2:12: "I suffer not a woman to teach" is interpreted by some authorities as a reaction against the earlier practice of allowing women to do so, by others as directed to illiterate, repressed women recently out of heathenism who were obviously unfitted for the task. There were few offices in the early church. But "From the first, women held official positions of influence. Phoebe (*Romans* 16:1) was evidently a deaconess. . . ."[18]

Further Biblical evidences and facts relative to the work of women in the church could well be brought into the focus of this study. According to the interpretation of all those bases, theological considerations are made, and policy and practice of the modern Christian church are formulated. Questions may arise concerning the nature and sphere of Biblical authority and the applicability of first and second century regulations necessary in a particular situation to church women with a new social status in the twentieth century. The pertinent specific question concerns the equality of men and women in every activity, function, and office in the church, including the full ordination to the ministry. For many people the answer is to be found in "all are in Christ Jesus."

Theological Position of American Churches

The disagreement sometimes found within a single denomination is seen in the "Report of the Committee on Women as Congregational Representatives to the National Council of the United Lutheran Church in 1936." The question had been raised by one synod whether it was scriptural for women to be delegates to synod. The committee felt that this was part of a larger question: "Whether women can be granted all the rights of lay members in our churches without violation of the

[17] *The First Epistle by Paul to the Corinthians.* By James Moffatt. New York, Harper and Brothers, pp. 231-33.

[18] *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,* p. 3103.

teaching of Holy Scripture: or whether the teachings of the Scriptures compel to withhold from them certain rights that are enjoyed by laymen." The majority report of the committee decided that this was not a matter of "dictating to men" in the sense of *I Timothy* 2:11, 12, but rather "a form of service, for which certain individuals are designated by the church, of which they are a part." The committee felt, however, that ordination of women to the ministry is "expressly forbidden" by the Bible.

The minority report, however, concluded that "the entire complex of the apostle's admonitions and argumentations" are "opposed to the admittance of women as delegates to, or members of, organizations which in the church of Christ were hitherto exclusively reserved to men. We certainly do not find in them, or elsewhere in the Scriptures, any approval of or encouragement for the introduction of such a practice."

This same minority report, however, quoted Luther as saying: "If it should come to pass that there were no man, a woman might get up and well preach to the others, if she had the ability to do so."[19]

The fact that women can be ruling elders in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. is regarded by some, at least, of the more conservative elements in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. as one of the major objections to the proposed merger of the two bodies.

William Douglas Chamberlain, professor of New Testament, Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, considers the scriptural texts discussed by the Lutherans in an article in the *Presbyterian* (Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.) for November 8, 1947, and concludes: "Racial, social, and sex distinctions are a matter of no moment for those who are in Christ. Women, in a Christian civilization, are no longer looked upon as inferior beings. Much of what we have been calling Christian civilization has been sub-, semi-, or even anti-Christian. If a woman has something worth saying, she has as much right to speak as a man."

This seems to be the general position of liberals on the subject, whatever their denomination.

[19] *Minutes of the Tenth Biennial Convention, United Lutheran Church of America,* 1936, pp. 408, 410, 412, 416, 418.

PART II

Women's Work as Volunteers in Denominational Organizations

I. WOMEN'S DENOMINATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

American church women carry on a wide variety of services and activities on a voluntary basis. Without these activities both local churches and denominations would be far weaker than they now are. The Federal census of *Religious Bodies, 1936,* found that there were "on the average . . . five women members for each four men" in American churches as a whole.[20] In most of the church bodies studied in this report there is a network of women's organizations from the local church to the national boards, sometimes culminating in a national general women's organization, sometimes in a national women's missionary society, or again in the women's division of a general board of missions.

In several denominations, a general national women's organization has been organized rather recently. The Women's Guild of the Evangelical and Reformed Church is a merger of the missionary society of the former Reformed Church in the U. S. and the "over-all" organization of the Evangelical Synod. Some national societies are loosely organized to provide coordination of the different activities of women's societies which actually function, nationally, mainly through the different national boards. This is true of the National Council of Women's Organizations of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and of the National Congregational Women's Fellowship that meets in connection with the General Council of the Congregational Christian Churches. In the Protestant Episcopal Church the name of the organization makes clear the relationship—the Woman's Auxiliary to the National Council of

[20] *Religious Bodies, 1936,* Vol. I, p. 23.

the Church. Some denominations appoint a woman national board secretary as a coordinator of women's work, sometimes rotating the responsibility among the different boards.

Since it is impossible to quote the precise statements of purpose of the many different organizations under discussion, perhaps that of the Women's Guild of the Evangelical and Reformed Church may be cited as illustrative of the "general" societies: "To unite all women of the church in Christian fellowship, and with divine help and guidance to develop an understanding of the work of the entire church, deepen spiritual life, stimulate sacrificial giving, and promote Christian service in the home, the local church, the community, the nation, and the world."

Disciple churches observe Woman's Day on the first Sunday in December. On this day Disciple women "make public testimony to their earnest concern for the world's redemption and dedicate themselves anew to the absorbing task in which they and all the other members of the church are called." Customs vary in different churches, but the stress is on missions and service.[21]

Until rather recently the usual pattern in the local churches of most denominations was the missionary society and the ladies' aid. There might be seven or eight, or even more, additional organizations in a given church. The questionnaire, already mentioned, asked respondents to list the women's groups in their own local churches. It was not always possible to interpret the replies with any degree of certainty, partly because of the impossibility of knowing what an unusual name signified. Nor could one be sure whether "missionary society" alone meant that the respondent had forgotten the ladies' aid or whether in that church the one society really did both types of work. There are, however, a few major trends that can be found in almost all of them.

The "Over-all" Organization

The trend today is toward an inclusive women's organization that undertakes to bring into its work all the varied types of activities carried on by women's groups, except perhaps those of girls and young women of late high school and college age or a little older, and organized Bible classes for women. Three denominations have carried this plan

[21] *Christian Evangelist*, December 3, 1947.

out through all, or nearly all, their women's societies: the Presbyterian Church in the U.S., the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Methodist Church. In 1912 the Presbyterian U. S. General Assembly authorized the "erection of an overhead organization of the women of the church, the Woman's Auxiliary," to include "all the departments of the work of the church." The local missionary and ladies' aid societies first came together in federations and then became woman's auxiliaries.[22] The 1948 General Assembly changed the name to "women of the church." The national organization is now known simply as the Committee for Women's Work. There are no other women's organizations in Southern Presbyterian churches except organized Bible classes.

The women's missionary societies of the Southern Baptist Convention, heading up in the Women's Missionary Union, are reported to include all types of women's activities in most Southern Baptist churches. The ladies' aid exists "only in a few remote places," according to well informed observers. The union is auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention.

With the merger of three Methodist bodies in the Methodist Church in 1940, the Woman's Division of Christian Service of the Board of Missions and Church Extension took over the work formerly carried on by the different national women's missionary societies. Local churches were instructed by the 1940 General Conference to merge their former societies into women's societies of Christian service. This is now nearly, but not quite, complete.

In the other denominations considered here, this unification has not gone so far, but practically all of them seem to be aware of the problem.

Replies from the following denominations in addition to those already mentioned indicated half or more of their local churches had the over-all type of organization: National Baptist Convention, Northern Baptist Convention, Seventh Day Baptist, Church of the Brethren, Congregational Christian, Disciples of Christ, Evangelical and Reformed, Presbyterian, U. S. A., and Protestant Episcopal. This study, of course, cannot assume that its returns are accurate for all groups. But, in view of the high percentage of returns received for most denominations, it seems probable that the figures compiled are not far from the truth for those bodies.

[22] *Minutes of the 62nd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.*, 1922, pp. 141-2.

The Organization in the Local Church

Churches with this type of organization are likely to follow one of two main patterns: complete integration of practically all types of activity into the one society; or a "federation" in which the different organizations maintain their identity and their special tasks but come together occasionally to consider mutual concerns. At their lowest point such federations may do little more than plan for church dinners, as one irritated woman officer commented. They may, however, mean a long step forward in bringing the women to realize that they really *can* work together even though they are young or old, deeply interested in missions or Christian social relations or only in the improvement of church property. Some churches which in theory have one general organization maintain additional independent groups.

In very small churches the ladies' aid may function as an "over-all" organization, with a missionary program "once a quarter." It does not, of course, usually, provide the well rounded variety of interests and activities that one finds in a well organized general women's organization. Seventh Day Baptist churches, apparently, often use the term "ladies' aid" for their "over-all" group.

A small society functions as a unit. Large ones usually divide into "circles" (small groups of women who work together more closely than is possible in the large organization), and come together perhaps once a month for a general program. Such circles may be chosen in a variety of ways: by a random drawing of names, by age or functional groups (employed women, for instance), by the section of the community in which individuals live, by a committee that attempts to work out groupings (changed yearly) that will be satisfactory to all concerned, and, sometimes on a purely social basis. In the last case there is always the danger that they will become church social clubs with very little relation either to the church or the association as a whole. A survey of Methodist Societies of Christian Service found that out of more than 27,000 societies in local churches two thirds have a membership of 50 or fewer and only one sixth have over 75.[23]

Some national denominational women's organizations issue elaborate programs and expect that they will be followed pretty closely; others

[23] "The Coming Kingdom"; *Seventh Annual Report of the Woman's Division of Christian Service of the Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church, 1946-47*, p. 215.

provide them on a "take it or leave it" basis; still others do not prepare formal programs but issue suggestive materials. Local programs vary, in part at least, according to the denominational stress at certain points. Probably there are very few indeed that do not include the spiritual life, some missionary education, work of some sort for the mission boards, some aspect of Christian social relations, local church activities, and stewardship. Methodist societies usually add the status of women in the church.

There are advantages and disadvantages in the over-all scheme, as in every other system of organization. The great basic advantage is, of course, the fact that it makes possible a unified approach to all the work of the local church, with opportunity for closer fellowship in small groups. It may be difficult, however, for older women and younger ones to work within the same organization and, especially, the same circles. Another problem is to maintain an adequate balance between different types of interests so that none of them are either soft-pedalled or overstressed. If programs from "the board" are followed too slavishly, then local initiative may be lost. Without them, programs may be very dull—and there is a danger of accepting too readily "a speaker" from some community activity with little or no consideration of the relation of its function to the special concerns of a *church* organization. This is one touchstone of the reality of the church itself to its members. Is their interest in the Red Cross and the Family Welfare Society, for instance, linked in their minds with their responsibilities as Christian women? Or is it something that they do as good citizens in an entirely different compartment of their lives?

The Missionary Society and the Ladies' Aid

All the denominations that took part in our questionnaire study showed some interest in the over-all organization. A number, however, have apparently not gone very far as yet in this reorganization. A little over half of the United Presbyterian women reported one or more missionary societies and a ladies' aid in their churches. More than three fifths of United Lutheran and the great majority of Lutheran Augustana Synod and Evangelical United Brethren women reported these organizations; the Five-Years' Meeting of Friends, Reformed Church in America, and the three Negro Methodist bodies reported the larger proportions of their churches organized in this way.

In some denominations a considerable proportion said that there were two or more separate missionary societies in their churches. A third of the United Lutheran replies and nearly two fifths of the Lutheran Augustana Synod churches indicated this arrangement; in most of the other denominations some such groups existed, but the proportion was much smaller. It may be far larger than the questionnaire replies indicate.

With this set-up women tend to concentrate on the type of activity that interests them most; the women who have some real interest in missions go to the missionary society; "hand-minded" women and those who think of "the church" in terms of their local institution go to the ladies' aid—though the first group are drawn in to help on important projects. As the trend in local churches toward raising money entirely by pledges rather than by church suppers and bazaars grows stronger, the tendency seems to be away from the ladies' aid type of organization. It should be noted that ladies' aid societies sometimes—one cannot say how often—take responsibility for local social service activities. In the past church socials had a real function in providing fellowship and wholesome recreation under church auspices, especially in small communities. To what extent that is still true no one can say.

Some women have more concentrated mission study under this arrangement than in the "over-all" organization; others in the ladies' aid none at all. Sometimes the real dividing line is between the older and younger women or on some other basis that does not make for full fellowship within the church. Where there are several missionary societies the division is likely to be between the different age groups; occasionally between "home" and "foreign" missions. Again there are certain advantages; women work with the group that most appeals to them. On the other hand, there is danger of unwholesome rivalry between groups and of overlooking newcomers since there is no joint responsibility for seeking out strangers. Also, it may be difficult to secure competent officers for so many organizations or to keep them all functioning adequately.

Young Adult Groups

A newer trend in most of the church bodies under consideration here is special work with young adults in either mixed groups of both sexes or each alone, or a mixed group and "interest groups" for each sex.

Denominational practice varies widely. The Methodist Church, for instance, has a Methodist Youth Fellowship for both sexes; girls' interest groups usually function under the Women's Society of Christian Service. The Episcopalian Girls' Friendly Society has a representative on the board of the national Woman's Auxiliary but is an independent organization. The age level for these girls' groups also varies with the denominations. It may include only late high-school and college age, or all those from twelve years old to twenty-five. That there is great need to give youth something of their own in the church and to challenge their convictions is beyond a doubt. One difficulty comes in trying to draw an age limit. The "girls' group" that was organized at seventeen may be a "fixture" in their minds long past the age when they are supposed to become part of the main women's work of the church. It may be difficult to keep both the teen-agers and those past twenty happy in the same society.

Employed Women's Groups

For the most part the Christian church in America has been slow to recognize the special problems and interests of the employed women in their midst. Today, when 29 per cent of all women in the United States are gainfully employed,[24] continued neglect is likely to mean the loss to the active church membership of an important section of its women. Obviously, they cannot attend afternoon meetings. Is there any other place in the church where they have the opportunity to feel themselves a vital part of it, if they cannot teach Sunday school or sing in the choir? If they are newcomers to the community, will they find it easy to feel at home in a new church?

A study of the extent to which New Yorkers were affiliated with organized groups in 1934-35 indicated that 88 per cent of working-class women and 63 per cent of white-collar had no group contacts. That is, "*in the bulk of the city's population, the unaffiliated persons constituted a majority.*" Church membership was not included unless the individual belonged to a group in the church. "Women have invariably more religious affiliations [than men] from the lowest to the highest economic class." But only 25 per cent of skilled, 37 per cent of the white-collar, and 44 per cent of business women had any group af-

[24] As of March, 1948. *Facts on Women Workers* (U.S. Women's Bureau), April 30, 1948.

filiations whatever.[25] For the white-collar worker the religious group was the most important type of membership. These data suggest the degree to which the people in large cities, and often in smaller ones as well, are dependent on purely personal contacts, though the group experience is certainly important in a democracy. Some Protestant churches are beginning to realize that the common phrase "The women will work in the church anyway," does not apply to the employed woman unless there is a place where she can work in the time she has available. The Presbyterian Church in the U.S., with some 42,500 women in 1,346 business women's circles in 1946-47, probably has the highest proportion in such organizations of any denomination. The Methodist Wesleyan Service Guild has the largest *number* of employed women in its membership, 3,600 units and over 80,000 members in 1948. The Northern Baptist Convention held a denomination-wide conference for employed women in the summer of 1948. A survey of employed women's groups by the Missionary Education Movement in 1946 showed that the members ranged in age from 18 to 55.

Most of the groups reporting used denominational program materials, but a great need was felt for interdenominational help. A series of ten programs, *At the Desk Next to Mine,* issued by the movement in 1947, has proved very popular. A few denominations prepare program materials for "evening groups," assuming that all women who are tied down during the day whether by family responsibilities or jobs will wish to work together. At that point there is sharp difference of opinion. Some think this arrangement works out best, others that it is difficult enough to plan programs to interest both the school teacher and the telephone operator or department store clerk, to say nothing of the factory worker, without adding those whose primary interest is in their home and babies. One group or the other, it is said, is likely to lose interest. Some denominations expect the "evening groups" to use the same programs as the daytime groups. Some national women's denominational organizations seem to leave the promotion of such groups to local initiative. Sometimes the "regular" women's organizations take a patronizing attitude toward the employed women, indicating in one way or another that they are on a lower scale in the organization "hierarchy." Still another problem is to keep one age group from dominating the others.

[25] "The Voluntary Associations of Urban Dwellers." By Mirra Komarovsky. *American Sociological Review,* December, 1946, pp. 686-98.

Unfortunately, the result may be either that there are no activities for employed women or that they tend to become clubs with little direct relationship to the church. Apparently but few people, whether church leaders or employed women, have given much serious thought to the question whether there are special types of activities in which they might use their skills.

Organized Sunday School Classes

Adult Bible classes for women are another important form of organization. Some denominations, particularly the Northern Baptists, United Lutherans, Methodists, and Evangelical and Reformed, have a great many such groups, others comparatively few. How many women participate in them there is no way of knowing. Often they provide an important service in promoting Bible study among their members. A Southern Presbyterian woman commented that the Bible class served as their study group. There may be, too, more opportunity for fellowship in their organization. Some keen observers feel, however, that all too often they compete with the other women's organizations, doing much the same things, and dissipating energy that might be better channeled through fewer societies. Still others complain that women who should be teaching in the Sunday school refuse to do so because they will not leave their adult class. Then the class may actually be a handicap to the whole church school, rather than a normal integral part of it.

Deaconesses,[26] Stewardesses, and Boards of Mothers

A number of denominations, especially those who have volunteer boards of deacons, also often have volunteer groups of women, usually known as boards of deaconesses, who may help to prepare the Lord's Supper, visit the sick, and look after local church benevolences. Deaconesses may, or may not, meet with the board of deacons, depending on the degree of recognition given them in a local church. In some cases they come to be thought of as actually a part of the board of deacons. Our data are inadequate in showing accurately the proportion of churches with such boards in any given denomination, since this question was not specifically asked (as perhaps it should have been). They are very common in Northern Baptist, Congregational Christian, and

[26] In this section the term "deaconesses" refers to *volunteer* groups of women, usually (but not always) known as boards of deaconesses.

Disciple churches. Southern Baptist churches, apparently, do not usually have such a woman's board although it exists in a few places. Northern Presbyterian churches occasionally have a group of deaconesses, not known as a "board," who "work under the Session" with no duties fixed by church law. From the very scanty information it has been possible to secure, it seems that one of their main duties is visiting the sick. In 1922 the Southern Presbyterian General Assembly revised the church law in regard to deacons and added a provision for "godly women" to "assist the deacons." How much use has been made of this arrangement, it is impossible to say.

The National Baptist churches of both conventions may have either deaconesses or a board of mothers. Occasionally a large church has both.

The African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, and Colored Methodist Episcopal churches follow the general pattern of Methodist Church government. But women apparently seldom serve as stewards. Frequently, there are boards of stewardesses that have functions similar to those of deaconesses in churches of some of the other denominations.

The Altar Guild

The altar guild is a group of women who take responsibility, especially in liturgical churches, for caring for the church altar. In the Episcopal Church this may be either a separate organization or a special group within the woman's auxiliary. There is an Episcopal National Committee of Diocesan Altar Guilds that encourages the formation of diocesan and missionary district altar guilds, endeavors to unite them for mutual benefit, to deepen the devotion and increase reverence in altar guild members, to maintain high standards in the guilds by conferences and interchange of experience, and to arouse interest in providing supplies for the altars of mission churches and institutions. The guilds arrange the flowers for the altar, prepare the elements for the Lord's Supper, care for the silver used in the service, and see to it that the altar cloths are kept in good condition. Altar guilds are, apparently, not as common in Lutheran churches as in Episcopal churches—though it may be that our respondents simply forgot them in answering the questionnaires. Occasionally an Evangelical and Reformed church has an altar guild or a chancel guild. In other denominations some of these responsibilities may rest on the deaconesses or on a "housekeeping committee."

Other Organizations

This, of course, by no means covers all the types of organizations in the denominations represented in our study. But it does cover most of the major types. The Episcopal Order of the Daughters of the King has as its object:

"1. To pray daily for the spread of Christ's kingdom among women, and for God's blessings on the labors of the order.

"2. To take regularly some part in the worship, study, and work of the church; to make a constant effort to bring other women within its influence . . . . " and to assist the rector in the "spiritual upbuilding of the parish."[27] Its members promise to wear the cross "habitually." Its members work in the women's organizations of the parish and also carry on special activities as a chapter. The senior order for women has about 4,500 members in about 320 chapters.

The Society of the Companions of the Holy Cross is a group of women of the Episcopal Church pledged to simplicity of life, to intercessory prayer, and thanksgiving. The society maintains a corporate life at Adelynrood, South Byfield, Massachusetts, where retreats and summer conferences are held and to which Companions go for periods of corporate life in the summer. Its membership reflects a wide variety of social attitudes as well as of churchmanship; qualification for membership depends on keenness of concern, not on the slant of one's opinions. There are between 400 and 500 members.

Dorcas societies are frequent in many denominations. Apparently, they always have benevolences as a major object. Sometimes the missionary society is called a Dorcas society, sometimes it is a "missionary and Dorcas" society, sometimes there are both. In the latter case it seems probable that the Dorcas society is concerned with local charitable work.

Lutheran welfare agencies frequently have women's auxiliaries that work with the denominational social welfare institutions. They provide supplies, financial assistance, and services of different types. One or two other bodies are developing similar organizations.

Activities of Women's Organizations

The questionnaire already referred to asked the women replying to check a list of suggested activities to indicate those carried on in their churches. The overwhelming majority checked "mission study," occa-

[27] From a card issued by the order.

sionally noting that it was rather inadequate. Practically every Lutheran Augustana Synod reply checked it; not quite three quarters of the Congregational Christian. However, evidence from other sources, including some of the comments on the questionnaires, make it clear that, by and large, intensive mission study is carried on less often than it was a few years ago. In some cases there is an occasional review of a mission study book or a monthly program on some one country. Some churches have "schools of missions" in which intensive work is done for a short time. Again the overwhelming majority—over four fifths in most cases—indicated that they worked for both the home and foreign mission programs. This may refer to financial contributions or to supplies furnished, or both.

The trend today in some denominations is definitely away from money raising by suppers and bazaars to voluntary pledges by the women. Half of the Southern Presbyterian women, and a little over half of the United Lutheran and Evangelical and Reformed women and United Presbyterian listed money raising as an activity. But the great majority of those in other denominations checked it. (Some may have referred to money raised by pledges.) Whether the money is secured by pledges or by money raising events, large sums go from the women's organizations to the denominational boards. No one could possibly estimate the total amount of money raised by Protestant church women in this country. They give to the budget of the local church as well as to that of the women's societies.

Community service was also checked as an activity by a considerable majority in most denominations. It must be admitted, however, that there was considerable confusion in the minds of the women about the meaning of this question. It was impossible to tell in many cases whether they really referred to the individual work of their members in community agencies or to the cooperation of their organization with other community groups, or to participation in the work of the local council of church women. Christian social relations and "social service" may mean almost anything, depending on the group, from "helping a poor family" to forthright work for better interracial relations, or concern for better housing or labor relations. During a period of racial tension in the spring of 1947 in Georgia many church women sat through trials of Negroes because they knew that the presence of an interested white person would mean a fairer trial. In a small town in South Carolina,

the women of a white Methodist society studied a book on race relations and then went to the city hall to request more adequate community facilities in the Negro section. From a National Baptist church in the Deep South came the report: "There are so many women in our church who can neither read nor write that we are opening a private school in the church to teach them."

A Southern Presbyterian woman wrote: "Through Red Cross, Community Chest, health council, juvenile protection, etc., many Christian women are taking the lead."

Among "other" activities most frequently noted was work for overseas relief—gathering usable clothing and food and sewing. An occasional church reported parent education as a part of its program.

2. WOMEN'S SERVICE IN GENERAL DENOMINATIONAL BOARDS

A. In the Local Church

Of 105 denominations about which information could be secured, church law and practice in 71 permit women to serve on local church boards. Thirty-three do not or have not had women in such capacities. (See Appendix B for details.) In one it varies in different dioceses. The Religious Society of Friends has always given women equality in spiritual matters. Their presence on the different local boards (with the possible exception of trustees) is taken for granted. Practice in regard to women serving on local church boards in bodies where it is possible varies from one church to another. The data in this section are taken mainly from the questionnaire to women leaders in local churches.

Functions of the Boards

The terms used to designate similar functions are often different in the different denominations. More important, the function indicated by such common terms as "deacon" and "elder"[28] changes from one denomination to another, and, sometimes, within the same denomination.

[28] In this section the terms "deacon" and "elder" do not include individuals with ministerial functions—though in certain other denominations the term "deacon" refers to the lowest ministerial order and in others the word "elder" denotes a ministerial order, or is the usual term for the minister.

The following outline states briefly the main terms used by the denominations covered in our questionnaire study for the more important boards of local churches and indicates the major function of each. These terms can be understood only in regard to denominational practice.

Church Council

In United Lutheran, Lutheran Augustana Synod,[29] and some Evangelical and Reformed churches the church council (deacons and trustees in Lutheran churches, customarily elders and deacons in Evangelical and Reformed churches) takes lay responsibility with the pastor for spiritual welfare, benevolences, and church property.

In the Northern Baptist Convention and the Church of the Brethren, perhaps some others, the church council in the local church consists of representatives of the major organizations in the church to plan activities and consider questions of joint concern. The degree of power it possesses depends on the local church.

Class Leaders

In Evangelical United Brethren churches today the class leaders take lay responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the church with the pastor. They do not, ordinarily, it seems, assume responsibility for a special group within the church, as was true in earlier years.

Consistory

In the Reformed Church in America and in some Evangelical and Reformed churches (some of them use the term "church council" to designate the same functions) the consistory (composed of elders and deacons), like the church council in some churches (see above), takes responsibility for the spiritual welfare (with the pastor) of the church, benevolences, and church property.

Deacons

In the following bodies the deacons guide the spiritual welfare of the church with the pastor. They also serve communion.

All Baptist bodies.

Church of the Brethren.

[29] Lutheran Augustana Synod churches may have a church council or a more loosely organized council of administration.

In the following denominations the main functions of the deacons are indicated in parentheses:

Congregational Christian (benevolences, serve the Lord's Supper, and may or may not take spiritual responsibility, depending on the church).

Disciples of Christ (serve the Lord's Supper and raise the money).

Presbyterian, U.S. (benevolences, often in charge of church property).

Presbyterian, U.S.A. and United Presbyterian (may or may not have a board of deacons. Usually take responsibility for benevolences; other functions depend on the local church).

Elders

Elders take lay responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the church.

Presbyterian, U.S., Presbyterian, U.S.A., United Presbyterian (in Presbyterian bodies the elders with the pastor form the session).

Disciples of Christ (they also administer the Lord's Supper but are not ministers).

Official Board

In the Disciples of Christ churches the official board is elected by the congregation. It may (or may not) have representatives from the major organizations of the church, depending on local practice.

In the Methodist Church the official board is usually made up of the stewards, trustees, and officers of the major organizations of the church. The board of stewards, or the board of stewards and the board of trustees together may constitute the official board, depending on the practice of the local church. The Evangelical United Brethren and the three Negro Methodist bodies follow, in general, Methodist practice.

Parish Council, Standing Committee, Church Cabinet

Like the Northern Baptist church council (which is merely a different name for the same function) the parish council consists of representatives of the major organizations of the church.

In the following its functions are advisory:

Evangelical and Reformed

United Lutheran and Lutheran Augustana Synod

Presbyterian, U.S. and Presbyterian, U.S.A.

Protestant Episcopal

Reformed in America

In the congregationally-organized churches—Congregational Christian and Disciples (in addition to the Baptist bodies and the Brethren)—its power depends on the local church. Congregational Christian churches are apparently tending to make the "standing committee" (under a variety of names) the main governing body of the local church.

Stewards

Stewards in the Methodist Church have a varied responsibility, which includes the finances of the church and the benevolences. The Evangelical United Brethren and the three Negro Methodist bodies follow, in general, Methodist practice.

Trustees

Trustees have charge of church property. Their importance depends partly on the system of organization in the church and partly on state law.

Vestry and Wardens

In the Protestant Episcopal Church the vestry has charge of church property and of relations with the rector. The wardens, usually members of the vestry, have special responsibilities in the latter field.

Practice in Regard to Women

The Church Council or Consistory

In the United Lutheran Church women are eligible to be members of church councils unless the constitution of the local church forbids it. Just over 4 per cent of the churches replying to our questionnaire reported that there was a woman on the council; the average was ten men to two women. Undoubtedly, many women are very slow to assume this responsibility. In the Lutheran Augustana Synod women are not permitted to serve.

In the Evangelical and Reformed Church, which may use either the term "church council" or "consistory," 17 per cent of all replies indicated that there was at least one woman on the consistory or the council—the average was eleven men to two women. In some churches women have been on the church council for twenty years, but, more often, it seems, the change from an all male board is of very recent date. The

Reformed Church in America does not allow women to serve on consistories.

Class Leaders; Lay Leaders

Just under two thirds of the replies from the Evangelical United Brethren churches indicated that their class leaders were all men. Slightly over half of the remainder reported both men and women serving in this capacity. While there may be as many as five or six class leaders, more often there are only one or two. It would seem from our data that a woman is more apt to be a class leader if there are at least two—though, evidently, she may on occasion be the only one, or there may be several women. Some churches noted that they had had a woman in the past but now had a man.

Methodist churches have a lay leader who takes particular responsibility with the pastor for the spiritual welfare of the church. (This question was not raised in the questionnaire.) Women are eligible but, apparently, usually serve only in small churches. At the annual conference level women have, it seems, been lay leaders in extremely few cases.

Deacons

In Northern Baptist, Congregational Christian, and Disciple churches women are eligible to serve as deacons—as they are to any position in the entire church—but, if our replies are to be regarded as indicative, they very seldom do. Just over 13 per cent of our Northern Baptist correspondents reported women on the board of deacons. In the Southern Baptist Convention women do not serve as deacons. They do serve occasionally in National Baptist churches, judging from our pretty scanty information, but it is unusual. This is true, likewise, of the Seventh Day Baptists. In the Church of the Brethren some churches provide that the wives of deacons shall serve with their husbands. It seems that women do not ordinarily serve except on this basis. About a tenth of Congregational Christian churches reported women deacons. The proportion of churches with women deacons in Disciple churches was just under that in the Northern Baptist churches—slightly over 12 per cent. Congregational and Northern Baptist churches have about the same number of men and women where women serve. Disciples reported half as many women as men on the board. For Congregational, Disciple, and

Northern Baptist churches, the question whether deaconesses are equal to deacons can only be answered by a person knowing a given local church. They may meet with the deacons and share in certain of their tasks; again they may not. Rarely, certainly, do deaconesses serve the Lord's Supper as the deacons do.

In the churches of the Reformed tradition deacons are of a lower rank in the church than elders. Women serve on the board of deacons in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. more often than on any other board—30 per cent of the replies to that question indicated that there were women on the board. An occasional church has only women deacons. In the United Presbyterian the proportion was about the same in our replies as for the Presbyterian, U.S.A., but the number was too small to be regarded as more than indicative. Women cannot be deacons in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.

Elders

Women can be elders in Disciple and Presbyterian, U.S.A. churches. They are not eligible in Presbyterian, U.S., United Presbyterian, or Reformed in America churches, and were not reported separately from the consistory in Evangelical and Reformed replies. The eldership is the point at which the strong tradition of sex equality in Disciple churches breaks down most completely. Only 1.1 per cent of Disciple churches reported women elders—a total of five in three churches out of 277 reporting. This, however, may actually be in excess of the proportion in the country as a whole. An exceptionally well informed Disciple minister was surprised to find any. The reason is probably the fact that the elders administer the Lord's Supper; the minister does not ordinarily. Tradition in every denomination seems to be strong against giving women a place in that rite. Fourteen per cent of Northern Presbyterian churches reported women elders in 1947—on the average, two women to eight men in the churches where women serve. In some cases they do not help to serve the Lord's Supper but take part in all the other duties of an elder.

Official Board

In a little less than three quarters of Disciples of Christ churches the official board includes women. In the vast majority of Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren churches the board includes both men and

women. The three Negro Methodist bodies tend to follow Methodist practice. In Methodist churches where there are no women on the official board it seems probable that it is made up of the board of stewards or stewards and trustees.

Replies from both Methodist and Disciple churches indicate that the official board is a larger organization when it includes women—24 men to 11 Methodist or nine Disciple women on a mixed board and 22 on the all male board. Disciples are likely to include the deaconesses where there are women on the official board. Judging from our replies, it may be estimated that the practice in the United Brethren churches is usually to have about the same number of men and women on the official board.

Parish Council, Church Cabinet, Church Council

There seems to be a distinct trend in the denominations represented in our study toward some sort of organization that includes the officers and representatives of all the major organizations of the local church. The official board of the Methodists and Disciples may or may not provide such representation. Large Northern Baptist churches sometimes have a large church council and a small church cabinet to take executive responsibility. About half of Northern Baptist and Congregational Christian and a little less than three fifths of the Brethren churches indicated that they had such a group—though one could not always be entirely sure what was meant by the terms used. In other denominations only a small percentage reported it. Its significance depends on what the church makes of it.

Stewards

Stewards are ordinarily a large group in the churches where they are found because of their varied duties. About three quarters of all the Methodist churches had both men and women stewards. (Those reporting women only were omitted since it was impossible in many cases to know whether the respondent had forgotten to give the number of men.) The average number is 17 men to eight women on mixed boards and 20 men on all male boards. Slightly over half of United Brethren replies reported men and women serving as stewards and a third only men. It seems that women do not often serve as stewards in the Negro Methodist churches.

Trustees

The importance of the trustee depends somewhat on the denomination. Certain individuals from an official board or standing committee may be designated as trustees to sign papers, etc., though the actual business is transacted by the entire group. Their influence in other churches may depend on personalities. If the most aggressive individuals are trustees, then in that particular church the trustees will have great influence. There is a considerable difference in the attitude of the different denominations toward women as trustees. Congregational Christian and Northern Baptist churches have women trustees in about 30 per cent of the churches replying. Most Seventh Day Baptist churches seem to have women trustees. In the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. just over a quarter of all churches replying have women on that board. But only a fifth of Methodist and United Presbyterian and only 16 per cent of United Brethren churches use women in that way. Disciple churches (where the trustees are likely to be designated from the official board) had only 5 per cent with women trustees. Three Southern Presbyterian churches and three Brethren churches reported women trustees. Replies from the Friends were not sufficient to justify a generalization. There is some indication that the equality of women in the spiritual life of Friends meetings does not always extend to business matters, though the available data do not justify any generalization. The Negro Methodist and the National Baptist bodies seem to be slow in giving women a place as trustees. But here, too, we do not have sufficient data to warrant generalizations.

Thus, in the Methodist Church women serve on the official board and as stewards more often than they do on the boards of most of the other denominations under review. But it has about the same proportion of women trustees as the United Presbyterian Church and fewer than the Presbyterian, U.S.A., Northern Baptist, or Congregational Christian. In part, the answer may be that Northern Presbyterian and United Presbyterian churches have to some extent regarded service as trustees as something that could be given to women. Women often serve as Methodist parsonage trustees, which seems to satisfy their interests at that point. The Methodist Status of Women Commission has been greatly interested in getting women on official boards and boards of stewards, but has had much less interest in their service on boards of trustees. Where there

are women trustees the average is usually about the same in the different denominations—five or six men and one or two women.

Vestry and Wardens

The question whether women can serve on parish vestries in the Protestant Episcopal Church is a matter for the diocesan convention to decide. A study of the subject by a committee of the 1943 triennial meeting of the Woman's Auxiliary of the Church showed that in 31 dioceses or missionary districts women serve on parish vestries or mission committees, in 42 they do not serve, in 11 they serve on mission committees but not on parish vestries.[30] In some churches the parish council functions as an "enlarged vestry." About 15 per cent of our Episcopal replies reported a woman on the vestry—on the average two women to eight men. No churches reported women wardens. Some dioceses permit women to serve on vestries, but forbid them to be wardens.

To the question whether there were more women serving on church boards than in 1940 the vast majority of Friends reported "no change" in accordance with the traditional equality of their meetings. But just under a tenth of United Lutheran and just over 15 per cent of Evangelical and Reformed replies reported more women in such positions. For the latter the figure is just below that for the churches with women on the consistory or council. The following denominations reported from a fifth to just over 30 per cent more churches with women on the boards: United Presbyterian, Protestant Episcopal, Presbyterian, U.S.A., United Brethren, Northern Baptist, Seventh Day Baptist, Congregational Christian, National Baptist, Inc., and Disciples. The following reported from two fifths to nearly three fifths more such churches: A.M.E. Zion, National Baptist, Church of the Brethren, Methodist, and A.M.E. The great majority of the Colored M. E. reported more women. Usually a much larger proportion of replies indicated that the women were participating more effectively than in 1940.

More important than the number of women on any board is the part they play. To answer that question requires a real knowledge of the local situation. If the women do not feel that it is important to attend meetings, if they are over-aggressive or unwilling to speak up at all, if

[30] *The Report of the Committee on Women in the Work of the General Convention.* (Unpublished.)

the leading men make it obvious that women are not really welcome, or that they expect the women to take all the real responsibility, or if the pastor obviously prefers an all male board—then, according to many of our respondents, their presence may not help the situation. If, however, both men and women are genuinely concerned for the good of the church as a whole, rather than the power or prestige they gain from the official position, it seems clear that such joint action may help greatly to unify and strengthen the whole program of the church.

Congregational Meetings

In many congregationally-organized churches business meetings of the congregation are held frequently to decide important business as it comes up. In small Baptist, Congregational, and Disciple churches participation in such meetings may give the women a full sense of sharing in the government of their church. In Lutheran churches and those of the Reformed tradition such meetings may be held once a year, or when a new pastor is to be elected, or other equally important matters must be decided. About two thirds of Baptist and Congregational churches and not quite three fifths of Disciples thought there had been no change in the participation of women since 1940. But about three quarters of United Presbyterians, almost three fifths of Evangelical and Reformed and Lutheran Augustana, the large majority of the Church of the Brethren and two fifths of United Lutherans thought women participated more freely. Indeed, a number of Evangelical and Reformed women said that they had begun to take part since that time. While women have a right to vote in the Reformed Church in America, tradition still prevents it in many churches. A minister may urge the *men* to come—by inference telling the women to stay away. Or if he is progressive and wants to put through something he thinks the women will approve, he may urge their attendance. About 20 per cent of Southern Presbyterian replies reported increased participation. One woman noted that while women could make motions in such a meeting "they never do."

B. In General National Boards and Agencies

All the twenty-one denominations included in our major study, except the United Presbyterian Church and the National Baptist, give women at least token representation on some boards, even though they

may not be eligible to serve on local church governing boards. Practice varies from the equal membership of men and women in the United Christian Missionary Society of the Disciples of Christ and the one third provision for Congregational Christian and Presbyterian, U.S.A. boards to the very slight representation of women on Reformed Church in America boards—which is of very recent date. If there is only one board that includes women, it seems most often to be the one dealing with Christian education. Two women have served with distinction as president of the Northern Baptist Convention. The 1948 Congregational Christian General Council elected its first woman moderator.

In national denominational assemblies practice again varies widely. In the Presbyterian, U.S., United Presbyterian, and Reformed Church in America women cannot act as delegates since they cannot serve as elders in local churches. Very few women are delegates to Presbyterian, U.S.A. General Assembly since very few women are elders. Mr. Wilbur LaRoe, moderator of General Assembly in 1947, has voiced concern over the fact that the church nationally is seriously handicapped in making adequate use of its women since so few are elders. On the other hand, the Lutheran Augustana Synod, which forbids women to serve as deacons and trustees in local churches, has a considerable proportion of women delegates to regional meetings and national Synod. The International Convention of the Disciples of Christ is not a meeting of delegates. Women attend in large numbers. In 1946 the Episcopal General Convention and the United Lutheran National Council each had a woman delegate for the first time.

PART III

Women's Work in Interdenominational Agencies

I. COUNCILS OF CHURCH WOMEN

Some interdenominational agencies are organized on a functional basis. Those most interested in missions or in religious education, for instance, work together in organizations devoted to a single task—as in the Florida Chain of Missionary Assemblies or councils of religious education. Other denominational organizations combine a variety of interests.

The earliest local interdenominational agencies were apparently organized for specific tasks. Conferences of Sunday school workers were started early in the nineteenth century and developed slowly into councils of religious education, now in many communities merged with the local councils of churches. In the beginning these brought together interested groups without much formal relationship to local churches. But as the work grew and a new understanding of needs and problems developed a more formal relationship was worked out.

The first joint activities of church women as women were probably for missions. In the 'nineties the first steps were taken on an interdenominational basis for providing textbooks for mission study. About the same time, women mission leaders named days for prayer for missions—for some years separate days for home and foreign missions. Finally, in 1920, the first Friday in Lent was chosen as the "Day of Prayer for Missions," home and foreign. The May Fellowship Day with stress on unity in the local community grew out of the home missionary work.

Some local interdenominational groups of church women were organized as early as 1912 and gradually grew in number and in the

breadth of their programs. At first, they studied missions, both home and foreign, and observed the World Day of Prayer. Gradually other activities were added. There were in the summer of 1948 nearly 1600 local councils of church women. Some, to be sure, are mainly World Day of Prayer groups; a few have employed executives, though most of them still depend on volunteer leadership.

Through the cooperation of the United Council of Church Women a questionnaire was sent to a representative sample of councils of church women to inquire about the types of activity carried on, the type of board membership (church or individual), the relationship of the council to the women's organizations of the local churches, and the relationship to the local council of churches (if any).

Activities of Councils of Church Women

All but one reported that they observed the World Day of Prayer; a few checked no other activity. Most of the group replying, however, observe May Fellowship Day, and a large proportion World Community Day for prayer and study for world peace. Councils of church women have taken the initiative in work for peace in many communities across the country. Not quite a third were carrying on ecumenical education to acquaint the women with the rituals and basic theological beliefs of the different churches in their midst. About half of them reported community service activities of different types, sometimes as a church body, sometimes with other community agencies. About half reported "other" activities. Many of these were probably in the community service field. World relief seems to have been the "other" activity most often reported. In 1946 a million diapers for European babies were sent through Church World Service by councils of church women and in 1947 they undertook to supply clothing for 500,000 children overseas.

Community service activities vary widely. In a number of cities representatives of councils of church women work with the juvenile courts to aid Protestant children. In others they work with the different welfare agencies. Some councils carry on parental education study groups. Some have promoted religious teaching in the schools. In Washington, D.C., the council took over much of the volunteer nurses' aid work in the city hospital at the end of World War II. In Syracuse, New York, the council of church women has a representative on the Community Legislation Committee and on the Community Discussion Council.

Work for better interracial relations is a striking feature of the activities of many city councils of church women. Nearly all the state councils are organized on an interracial basis, at least to the extent of including some Negro women on the state board. Some local councils became interracial when they realized that they could not really be ecumenical if Negro women were not included. After the lynching of four Negroes in Georgia in July, 1946, the Georgia Council of Church Women issued a forthright statement urging church women to "speak out . . . against all intolerance and injustice." In Saginaw, Michigan, the council of church women recently joined with the council of churches in a statement to the city hall protesting against discrimination in allotting Federal housing to Negro GIs. Some councils, especially in the South, promote more adequate facilities for Negroes. Some have worked for more equal opportunities for Negroes in employment, others to reduce discrimination in restaurants.

"Interfaith" relationships may range from social occasions to a serious attempt to learn something of the symbolism of another faith. Jewish women in some cities have contributed generously to the overseas relief work of the councils of church women. A few councils are organized on an interfaith basis. This may prove to be very valuable, or it may lead to a watering-down of the essentially religious character of the council of church women.

State councils are now organized in all the different states, although one is still only provisional. Activities of state councils vary widely. Some of them do relatively little in addition to promoting the organization of new local councils, the observance of the three special "days," overseas relief, and work for migrants. Others develop special state projects. The Arkansas State Council of Church Women took the lead in organizing a Legislative Council with representatives from 17 state organizations (mainly women's) which has already done effective work.

Representative Character of Councils of Church Women

Councils of church women were asked in our questionnaire how their boards of directors are chosen. In some councils the board is chosen by vote of the council of church women itself at its annual meeting, in others they are formally chosen as representatives of the women's organizations of the local churches in the council, and still others have some members who are appointed or elected and some who represent the af-

filiated local church organizations. There was no majority for any one method, though there are a few more councils of church women with elected boards. Many of them have developed gradually out of groups of women who were concerned to carry on certain types of activities together. The precise relationship of such a council of church women to the local church or to the council of churches was not a matter of great importance to them. (This is not surprising in view of the fact that the local church women's organizations so often work at their separate tasks without much formal relationship to the whole church.) Almost two thirds of those replying felt, however, that their board members really did represent the women of the church from which they came, regardless of the way they were chosen. Washington, D.C., provides that the presidents of regional denominational women's organizations, or their representatives, shall constitute the board during their term of office. Thus, Negro women are automatically included on the board of the Washington Council, and the race question cannot enter into the selection of board members. One eastern council of church women, which is the women's department of the local council of churches, has its members chosen by the governing bodies of the local churches, since that is the way council members are selected. But there are no women on the governing boards! That is an extreme case, to be sure.

Where the organization is less formal it is sometimes possible to attract women from churches that do not cooperate formally in the more official agencies. That may be very important in developing relations between them and the other church bodies of the community. On the other hand, it may lead to misunderstandings as the council of church women develops closer relations with the council of churches.

"Representation" may mean different things to different people. How can there be sufficient freedom to bring in the cooperatively-minded women of churches that for a variety of reasons will not join a council of churches, and still keep the council of church women close to the churches from which they come and to the council of churches? The first may make possible the development of a more cooperatively-minded community. Without the latter there is danger that the council of church women may become just another community agency without being really strongly rooted in the church. The members of councils of church women are lay women whose relationship in this connection is to the women's organizations of their churches, not to the church as a

whole. This in itself is likely to mean a different attitude toward many problems than that of a body that represents directly the church official boards and includes both clergy and lay people (men and women). This does not mean that either attitude is "right" and the other "wrong," but that each group must make a genuine effort to understand the other.

2. THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN COUNCILS OF CHURCHES

The network of interdenominational agencies includes councils of churches in many states and cities—frequently organized to take in an entire metropolitan area. Usually they include both the functional tasks, such as cooperative work in the field of religious education, and the general approach to the problems that Protestantism faces today. Directly or indirectly, they represent the local churches as churches where councils of church women represent only the women's organizations of the church or individual members. How then do women share in their activities?

The picture is "spotty," even as it is in the churches themselves, perhaps *because* of that fact. Relationships between the councils of churches and councils of church women vary from complete independence to "friendly cooperation" and to complete integration of the latter as a department of the council of churches. Just under half of the replies reported that the council of church women is a department or division of the council of churches. A very few councils of churches have evidently given the subject little thought since there is no provision for any representation from the council of church women and there are exceedingly few women taking any active, responsible part in the organization. In a quarter of the councils of churches replying there is formal representation of the council of church women on the executive committee but no closer formal relationships.

In some cities where the council of church women is a department of the council of churches neither group, it seems, has actually come to grips with what that really means in terms of day-to-day action—to say nothing of having caught the vision of what wholehearted cooperation without concern for the prestige of one organization as against the other might mean. Still others, happily, have worked out genuine

cooperation on a basis that is satisfactory to both. The constitutions of the older councils of churches often leave it entirely to the local church to decide what its representation in the council shall be. In that case, there are likely to be very few women. One experienced council executive suggests that the basic difficulty is the fact that there are too many ministers and too few lay delegates, whether men or women. The newer councils are more likely to follow the recommendation of the Inter-Council Field Department that the delegation from each church include a layman, a woman, and a representative of youth.

Several illustrations of different types of situations that may arise where the council of church women is a department of the council of churches may be given. In one eastern city the leadership of the council of church women seems to be more dynamic than that of the council of churches of which it is the "women's division." As a result, the former has an elaborate program with but little more relation to the council of churches than if they were at opposite ends of the city rather than under the same roof. Without questioning for a moment the value of the work done, one may wonder what might be accomplished if both groups would really try to see the city's problems as a joint project with genuinely cooperative thinking. The executive of the council of churches in a large Midwest city said that, as a newcomer, he was "shocked to see how few" women were active in the council work, though the council of church women is a department of the council. The only office held by a woman is that of second vice-president. There are 18 women to 197 men on "the more important committees" and one woman to 33 men on the executive committee. The executive of the council of churches in a large city on the West Coast on the other hand reports an "effective and happy" relationship with the council of church women in which the departments and committees of both are "parallel, with cross representation." Similarly, the executive of an eastern council of church women in a large city feels that with the council of church women a department of the council of churches things work "much more smoothly and with fewer complications both as to local machinery and public understanding."

These are types of situations that are probably repeated in greater or less degree in many communities. It is evident that in some places long strides have been made in developing a situation in which the two groups work together in harmony. In others there is friction—or the danger of

it—that may gravely hamper cooperative Protestant work. One problem is finance, for there is not likely to be enough money for local work of this type to satisfy everyone. If the council of women was independent before it became a department of the council, then, if the former does not handle its own budget and must get along with less money than before, a difficult adjustment is necessary. (This adjustment is the more difficult because the control of the purse strings has long been a symbol of women's emancipation.) But if both the council of church women and the council of churches are fully informed about the needs and values of the different projects of the two groups, it becomes much easier. Have the men had an opportunity to be fully informed about the women's program? If there are no women on the comity committee, do they realize the vital importance of that work? If the religious education committees are made up largely of women working in that field, do either the men of the council or the leaders of the council of church women have a real understanding of the needs and problems?

Basically, it would seem that the real question is whether both groups are willing to give up some of their independence and "superiority" for the sake of a joint goal. Sometimes, it seems, the women want the advantages of being a department of the council of churches without its responsibilities. Sometimes, it would seem, the men, quite unconsciously, have not altogether shaken off the concept of the ladies' aid subordinate to the board of trustees, and do not really appreciate the development of the newer women's organizations. If either group (or both of them) is on the defensive, then the situation may become very difficult for everybody. Two illustrations of different types of difficulties follow. A state council executive, who finds the relationship with the state council of church women "the most unsatisfactory" one in the council's work, complains that "a small but rather powerful group in control [of the state council of church women] . . . continually fights for power." The president of a council of church women in a large city notes that their organization is many years older than the very new council of churches. She says ruefully: "We are in the position of a grandmother being called on to be the little sister of her grandson." Eventually, she feels her organization "*must*" become a department of the council. But, she adds, it would be "much easier for us women as individuals to cooperate and sacrifice if the attitude of a few of the

leaders . . . was not so patronizing toward women." Fortunately, other communities are pointing the way, as has already been indicated.

3. THE UNITED COUNCIL OF CHURCH WOMEN

The United Council of Church Women combines in its membership and program both the general and the functional approach. It was organized in 1941, bringing together in a single organization the former National Council of Church Women and the local interdenominational women's work of the Foreign Missions Conference and the Home Missions Council. Its membership, according to the constitution, consists of "those interdenominational groups, local and state, which seek to carry out its purpose and program and aid in its support and whose enrollment has been recognized by the National Board; those national interdenominational missions agencies which have been recognized as cooperating and supporting agencies; also those national interdenominational agencies which seek to cooperate in its program and support and whose application has been approved by the National Board." In addition to the officers of the council and committee chairmen the National Board includes representatives of state and local councils of church women, of the Home Missions Council and Foreign Missions Conference, presidents of state councils and of the council of the District of Columbia, presidents of the national denominational women's organizations during their term of office, the women executive secretaries of the Home Missions Council and the Foreign Missions Conference, four representatives each from the Federal Council of Churches and the International Council of Religious Education, and five members-at-large named by the National Board.

The purpose of the United Council is "to unite church women in their allegiance to their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, through a program looking to their integration in the total life and work of the church and to the building of a world Christian community."

Thus, membership in the United Council includes representatives of both denominational and interdenominational bodies, and of both formally-accredited interdenominational agencies and the more loosely organized councils of church women. On the one hand, this makes for greater freedom of action; on the other, it is more difficult to define

precisely what representation means in terms of official relationship to other national interdenominational agencies. Because of this greater freedom the United Council has been able to go further in some fields of action, notably interracial, than might be possible in a more officially representative body. Again, it becomes more difficult to develop really satisfactory relations with agencies whose delegates are all appointed by church boards or by the ecclesiastical organization of the churches.

The United Council stimulates the organization of state and local councils of churches. It promotes the observance in local communities of its three special "days": World Day of Prayer on the first Friday in Lent, May Fellowship on the first Friday in May, and World Community Day on the first Friday in November. The first two were already established for women's groups before the organization of the United Council. World Community Day for prayer for world peace and for study of the problems involved was first observed in 1943. In the spring of 1948 a million and a half commitment cards were sent to church women asking them to pledge themselves to pray and work for world peace. An associate secretary of the United Council is an official observer at the United Nations, making a direct channel for information to the women of the local councils. Local councils are urged to study their communities and to choose the areas in which they will work in view of local conditions.

In 1947 there were about 15,000 observances of the World Day of Prayer. At these services offerings are taken for interdenominational missionary projects, both home and foreign. Each is training people to help their neighbors and themselves. In 1948 more than $200,000 was contributed at the World Day of Prayer services (as of August 15).

The United Council's work in the field of Christian social relations, particularly race relations, is noteworthy. Its national board includes Negro, Chinese, Japanese, and American Indian women. In 1946 a study, "The World Charter and Your Community," was carried on through a grant from the Rosenwald Fund. Local councils were asked to study the attitudes of their own communities toward minority groups. In addition certain councils were asked to make a special study of segregation. At the 1946 National Assembly a Negro delegate who was retiring from the national board asked the privilege of the floor to say that she had been doubtful when the United Council was founded, but she said: "You have achieved brotherhood."

4. GENERAL NATIONAL INTERDENOMINATIONAL AGENCIES

Nationally, the Foreign Missions Conference, Home Missions Council, Missionary Education Movement, International Council of Religious Education, and the United Stewardship Council are functional organizations. The national denominational boards in those fields are represented in the appropriate agency. But in the Federal Council of Churches the denominations are represented as a body, through members chosen by their national assemblies.

The women's mission boards are represented in the two national missionary agencies. Formerly, there were separate women's cooperating agencies—the Federation of Women's Boards of Foreign Missions and the Council of Women for Home Missions. Some years ago each one merged with the appropriate general agency. Both the Foreign Missions Conference and the Home Missions Council have women among their executives and certain committees in which women are particularly interested. Women participate in all the work of the organizations. The constitution of the Home Missions Council urges the cooperating boards to include women in their delegations. Both the Foreign Missions Conference and the Home Missions Council have had women chairmen or presidents, respectively, for several terms.

The board of managers of the Missionary Education Movement is almost evenly divided between men and women. The constitution of the International Council of Religious Education makes no specific provision for women members. There are 313 men delegates and 44 women; 313 men and 144 women serve on committees. The United Stewardship Council has 82 men and 10 women. The latter come from denominational boards that have women responsible for stewardship promotion.

In the Federal Council of Churches, on the other hand, the denominations are represented as a whole; delegates are chosen by the national denominational assemblies. Its constitution provides that each denomination is entitled (a) to three members plus one additional for "every 100,000 communicants or major fraction thereof," and (b) to appoint additional members, not to exceed one third of those provided for in (a), who must be laymen or lay women. In the spring of 1947 there were 538 men and 63 women delegates; 857 men and 202 women serve on departmental commissions and committees.

PART IV

Women Employes of the Church

I. A GENERAL STATEMENT

No one knows today how many women are employed by the American churches in different types of activities. There are professional workers: women ministers; missionaries, home and foreign; deaconesses; executives and field workers in denominational and interdenominational organizations; directors of religious education; physicians, nurses, and technicians in church hospitals; social workers; teachers; and writers and editors of church periodicals. That is only a partial list. Church secretaries and parish visitors may—or may not—carry responsibility on a professional basis. Many clerical workers are needed in denominational and interdenominational agencies. Institutions, such as hospitals, homes, and schools, need cooks and housemothers in addition to the professional workers. Some large denominations have no estimate of the total number of women employes. Some have very few professional women workers; others many.

A few careful studies have been made. In 1940, the Protestant Episcopal Joint Commission on Social Insurance for Lay Employes of the Church reported that there were nearly 6,000 lay women employes, of whom 3,050 were full-time workers.[31]

The educational qualifications required of women in church work have tended to be below those for similar work in secular agencies. The trend today is to demand at least a college degree for professional workers. The Methodist Board of Missions and Church Extension, the United Lutheran Board of Deaconess Work, and the National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church have recently adopted standards requiring

[31] *Report of the Work of the National Committee on the Training and Employment of Women for Work in the Church, of the National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church, 1942-43,* p. 22.

the professional church worker to have a bachelor's degree, with a year or more of graduate study to include "religious content" material, and specialized professional training in some field. Practical experience under supervision is also required. The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. requires that "commissioned workers" have four years' academic training beyond high school, including at least two years of "specific training for church work."

In 1942-43 the Protestant Episcopal Church made an elaborate study of its women employes. This has not been published in full but was made available for this study in manuscript form. Some of these women, to be sure, do not consider themselves "church workers"; they happened to be employed by a church agency; others, such as nurses and social workers, may feel a sense of Christian vocation in their life work, but this might be carried on in secular institutions as well as in church agencies. Still others have a vocation to church work.

The latter was the group with which the study was concerned. It was found that those who were in religious education or general church work were more likely to consider themselves "church workers" than were those in social work, secretarial work, institutional administration, or general education under church auspices. The committee making the study concluded that: "The pastoral function is the central integrating factor in the work of women in the church." If social work is done on a religious as well as a secular basis, then its task, too, is essentially pastoral. There seemed to be a difference in the mind of the clergy consulted as to the value of a religious commitment. Some of them felt that their first concern in selecting a teacher, social worker, or secretary was for her professional skill and general personal qualities; church membership was not so essential. For religious education, general parish and evangelistic work "a sense of vocation was necessary."[32]

2. MISSIONARIES

What is a missionary? Probably no one could formulate a definition that would be entirely acceptable to all the mission boards of the different church bodies. Dr. A. L. Roberts of the Presbyterian, U.S.A. Board of National Missions has proposed one that is worth quoting even

[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 110, 76-7.

though there is no complete agreement: "A Christian missionary is a Christian who is sent by the church to the functional and geographical frontiers of national and international life to share the content of the gospel, to help people see its relevance for life as they live it, where they live it, and to bring them to a commitment to Christ. The Christian who does this in the area of the responsibility of the Board of National [Home] Missions is a national missionary; the Christian who does this in the area of responsibility of the Board of Foreign Missions is a foreign missionary." Thoughtful students of the subject point out that women have had their greatest opportunity for pastoral work on the mission field.

Foreign Missionaries

In the early years of the missionary movement only married women who went with their husbands were sent as missionaries. Gradually, it became clear that single women were needed for work with women and children in the mission lands for a type of work that neither the man missionary nor his wife, tied down by home cares, could give. In the years since 1870 when Isabella Thoburn went to India under the newly organized Methodist Women's Foreign Missionary Society, thousands of American women, single and married, have gone to the mission fields. In the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. alone 2,700 women were commissioned from 1870 to 1945.

The International Missionary Council estimates that there are about 6,000 women missionaries from the churches of the United States in foreign service today; a half or more of these are married. In 1945 the number of new women missionaries sent out by the boards in the Foreign Missions Conference was about equal to that of men.

A study of salaries paid to single women foreign missionaries by the Foreign Missions Conference in 1946[33] indicated a wide range of salary scale. In some countries the highest cash salary paid is more than double the lowest. Nearly all of the 21 boards replying to the questionnaire provided a residence, but not board, for their single women missionaries. Most of these boards do not increase salaries for long-term service. Only one board has no pension plan for its retired missionaries. Missionary salaries, thoughtful observers point out, must be high enough to maintain the health and efficiency of the missionaries. Yet their man-

[33] From an unpublished manuscript.

ner of living cannot be completely unrelated to that of the people with whom they work. Mission boards, it seems, usually pay single women lower salaries than single men.

Home Missionaries

There are, perhaps, even fewer data about home or "national" missionaries than about those in foreign countries. One reason for this is the fact that a home missionary may be a teacher in a church school for Negroes in the South, a social service worker in a great industrial city, a rural church worker, a physician, nurse, or hospital technician in a hospital in Alaska—to suggest only a few types of work. Yet all of these professions may also be carried on in church institutions under local auspices that may or may not be regarded as part of the home missionary enterprise. Some denominations are tending to think of their workers in terms of the type of work done, rather than under the general term of missionary. Others feel that there is an essential basic difference, suggested in Dr. Roberts' definition, which should not be forgotten.

The Home Missions Council carries on work on an interdenominational basis in migrant camps, government Indian schools, and training for the Negro rural ministry, and until recently in some areas where the influx of people for war work left the existing churches unable to give adequate service to the newcomers. The Home Missions Council, it may be noted, makes no distinction in its salary scale for race or sex.

3. LOCAL CHURCH EMPLOYES

Here again, many different types of work may be done by women employed by local churches. A great urban institutional church may have a staff that includes clerical workers, social workers, experts in religious education, and group workers. A smaller church is more likely to have but one woman who may have to combine secretarial work with pastoral calling and some responsibility for religious education.

The pastor's assistant is usually a general worker, combining a wide variety of tasks. The line between her work and that of the director of religious education may be hard to draw in actual practice. The present trend seems to be to recommend that a pastor's assistant should have at least two years of college work with some specialized training for re-

ligious work. Data on salaries are very scanty, but it seems safe to assume that they are below those paid recognized directors of religious education.

Directors of Religious Education

Several surveys of religious education workers in different denominations have been made. The Episcopal study referred to above found that "on the whole the work of religious education has been committed to women and it has been done on a semi-professional basis." Slightly over half of the Episcopal group for whom information was secured had an A.B. or higher degree.[34] Some Episcopal clergymen who said they preferred a woman director of religious education gave the following reasons: women work better with women and children, there is less danger of jealousy between the rector and a woman assistant, well trained women are available for lower salaries than men with the same qualifications. The National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church is urging a minimum salary of $2,400 for directors of religious education.

In the study of *Personnel Standards and Practices for Women Church Workers in the United Lutheran Church*,[35] only two of the deaconesses who were in charge of religious education in a parish had a college degree in addition to their training in the Motherhouse (deaconesses are discussed under heading 4, Part IV). Only one of the other directors of religious education had had any postgraduate training in religious education. The entire group, it should be noted, was small.

A more elaborate study of directors of religious education in Congregational Christian Churches was made by Erwin L. Shaver, secretary of leadership education for the denomination.[36] While this was primarily a denominational enterprise, it was "broadly nondenominational in its scope." One questionnaire was sent to persons who were serving or had served as directors of religious education or as "assistants with a major responsibility for the local church educational program," and another questionnaire to Congregational ministers of churches employing directors of religious education. The latter indicated that just under two thirds of those in service were women. Three fifths of the pastors re-

[34] *Op. cit.*, p. 127.

[35] Philadelphia, United Lutheran Board of Deaconess Work, 1946.

[36] "Directors of Religious Education: A Survey." By Erwin L. Shaver. *Religious Education*, November-December, 1946, pp. 345-375, and January-February, 1947, pp. 3-27. Report available from Dr. Shaver.

plying indicated, however, that they would prefer a man director; two fifths preferred a woman. Theological seminaries reported a slightly higher preference for women in the calls they receive. About three fifths of the pastors said they needed a worker who could take on other duties.

Just over half the group were under 36 years of age, and two fifths of the total number were under 30. One reason for their comparative youth may be, Dr. Shaver suggests, "the increasing practice of using relatively untrained and younger persons." Very few of the women had been ordained. A "high proportion" were college graduates. While a number had done some graduate work, the replies did not show "a high degree of general educational specialization or of special training in religious education." Dr. Shaver thinks that this bears out "a tendency to pay less attention to special educational or religious educational training as such and more to the prospective educational worker's personality and possibilities of growth on and into the job." The median director, it seems, has stayed in her present church a little less than two years. This, he comments, is "a serious challenge to all Christian leaders." The median salary range paid by churches at the time of the inquiry was $1,824, which is "*considerably above those of previous years.*" This, it may be noted, is approximately the upper minimum recommended by the Episcopal Church in 1945 but far below that now approved. Dr. Shaver comments that "our churches are bidding strongly with each other" to secure "the relatively few qualified workers now available." Replies from pastors indicated that two thirds of the churches do not discriminate between men and women in their salary scale. (Comments from women directors make one wonder if that is not a bit over-optimistic.) The directors replying to the questionnaire recognized two major needs in their training: "better teacher training" and understanding of human relations. The most important qualities, as the pastors saw it, were "*consecration, a call, love for people, and a well rounded personality.*"

An important aspect of the whole problem is the question of placement. A questionnaire to denominational and interdenominational agencies working in the field of religious education revealed "the utter inability of these administrators and organizations to find qualified persons for local church educational positions." Today, Dr. Shaver says, "almost everyone, whether qualified or not, can get a job!" A few years ago, educational workers were "a drug on the market." The demand

today is especially for qualified weekday teachers and supervisors of religious education and for local church directors of religious education, with pastors' assistants as third. The reasons given for the lack of workers were in order of importance: "Inadequate salaries, short tenure of office, lack of defined standards, failure to recruit, inadequate training, absence of ecclesiastical recognition, an oversupply in former days and the 'scrapping' of women at an early age." A decided majority of those replying to this questionnaire felt that the individual should be trained for other types of church work as well.

In this connection the attitude of theological seminaries and other training schools toward training women directors of religious education is important. A questionnaire to such institutions revealed only a small number of graduates, mainly from a very few schools. More than a third of the schools replied that they did not encourage religious education students. Although the "decided preponderance" of judgment was that such directors should be trained in theological seminaries, the Bible training schools are "doing what little is being done," Dr. Shaver finds.

As a part of this study of *Women in American Church Life,* questionnaires were sent to the women students of two large eastern theological schools asking their plans after graduation and for any comment they cared to make.[37] Replies were received from nearly all the women students from one seminary that accepts only 10 women, or fewer, in each class. Only one reported that she expected to be a director of religious education in a local church; almost half hoped to be foreign missionaries or teachers of religion. Five out of 29 of the women students replying from the other seminary, which has long had a strong school of religious education, expected to be directors of religious education. Some expected to enter the "ministry of music." Eight, to be sure, were married, or looking forward to marriage. Some of the latter expected to use their training as volunteer workers. A woman from the first seminary, who expected to do student work, commented: "Far too little emphasis is placed on Christian *education*. . . . We need competent trained people to direct religious education programs, be it man or woman." She added: "I believe the treatment given to many directors of religious education by the pastor they work with and the official boards is quite notorious." It is

[37] Limitation to two seminaries only was due to lack of resources for an adequate survey.

up to the church, she felt, to "demand and take responsibility for training women who are interested in this work. Being trained on the job by a busy pastor and lay board is *not enough.* Seminaries must open their doors and take more women." Similarly, another thought that in view of the need it was "an extremely short-sighted program to limit opportunities for women to train themselves" for religious education work.

One woman in the second seminary felt that students training for the ministry have adequate theological training but not enough in "the practical difficulties of dealing with people." But those who expect to enter religious education work "know *methods* of teaching, but often have no academic knowledge with which to back up the methods. One cannot teach without having sufficient material *to* teach!"

4. DEACONESSES

In the United States the use of deaconesses[38] developed in a number of denominations in the latter half of the nineteenth century after the American churches had become acquainted with the work of the Lutheran deaconesses in Germany. The Methodist Church had in 1947 approximately 565 deaconesses in active service. This includes some in different types of interdenominational church work. More than a quarter are in local church work; many others are community workers in large cities or hospital workers. Ten Lutheran bodies had 386 deaconesses in active service in 1946. The Episcopal Church now has fewer than 100 in active service, according to *The Church a Profession for Women.*[39] The Evangelical and Reformed Church has a small number, nearly all of whom are nurses in deaconess hospitals, homes for the aged, or on the mission field. The Evangelical Church dissolved its Deaconess Society when it merged with the United Brethren Church in 1946. There are a few in other denominations.

[38] The term "deaconess" is used here to designate women members of an "order" or "office" who have been "set apart" or "commissioned" or "consecrated" (depending on denominational terminology) to devote themselves to church work. They receive maintenance and a small stipend. They resign as deaconesses if they marry, but widows may be reinstated, at least in some denominations. It does not refer to volunteer workers, also called deaconesses in some denominations. These are discussed under heading 1, Part II.

[39] *The Church a Profession for Women.* New York, National Council, Protestant Episcopal Church, 1947, p. 10.

Deaconesses may, or may not, live in community houses or institutions. Lutheran deaconesses are likely to do so. If they are assigned to work in a single parish they are more likely to make their own arrangements. Methodist deaconesses no longer wear the traditional black garb. Episcopalian and Lutheran deaconesses do, though the latter are beginning to question whether this should be required.

There is a National Conference of Episcopal Deaconesses but no central placement bureau. The Methodist Deaconess Bureau provides a placement service and also helps to maintain contact with the deaconesses. The Lutheran bodies that recognize deaconesses have Boards of Deaconess Work. Until recently these were likely to be all men but more and more the concern and responsibility of women are being recognized. The biennial Conference of Lutheran Deaconess Homes in America brings together the deaconesses and board members from the different Lutheran bodies for consultation and fellowship.

Why have the numbers of deaconesses been dwindling in recent years? There seem to be many reasons: the competition of many different types of vocational opportunity for work, both church and secular, is a very important one. Deaconesses have tended to have relatively poor status as church workers. This, apparently, is partly because standards for training have tended to lag behind those for other professions in the church; partly because neither as parish workers nor as social workers are they ordinarily trained for highly specialized service; partly, no doubt, because even in the church status tends to be associated with salary. Both Methodists and United Lutherans report much greater interest in deaconess work since educational standards have been raised.

Sister Anna Ebert, directing sister of the Philadelphia Motherhouse (U.L.C.A.) speaking before the 1946 Conference on Lutheran Deaconess Homes in America, pointed out some of the difficulties in procuring adequate training for the deaconesses. The agencies they served found it hard to realize that the expert service they wanted could not be "acquired as a by-product of full-time service." There has been a tendency to "belittle educational interests." Another difficulty is the "degree of subservience . . . expected of deaconesses," which is "carried to extreme in the opposition to the advanced education of deaconesses for fear they will no longer be willing to do so-called menial work."[40]

[40] *Twenty-Seventh Conference of Lutheran Deaconess Homes in America,* June 21-22, 1946, p. 32.

5. WOMEN MINISTERS

Of 111 denominations for which information could be secured, 41 ordain women ministers and seven license them. (See Appendix B for details.) The Methodist Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church ordain women as "local preachers" but do not give them full status as members of Conference. The United Brethren Church did ordain women but this was given up in the merger that became the Evangelical United Brethren Church. Ordained women may continue to serve but no new licenses to preach will be given women. The Evangelical and Reformed Church in 1948 ordained its first woman minister. She is assistant pastor of a very large church. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. submitted the question of the ordination of women ministers to its presbyteries in 1946. It was voted down, though by a slightly narrower margin than in 1930. The arguments against it in Presbyterian discussions seemed usually to be based on sex prejudice or on the theory that a married woman could not do the work required. Biblical and theological arguments were not heavily stressed, though the most conservative group in the church undoubtedly considers it un-Biblical. Some of the more theologically conservative denominations insist that this is true.

Number of Women Ministers

How many women ministers are there in the country? In 1940 there were 3,308 who gave their occupation to the Federal census as "clergyman."[41] Presumably, this figure included pastors, "ministers of education" in large churches, evangelists, and perhaps others in various types of general church work. Not included in the census are ministers' wives who are ordained. They may carry a substantial responsibility for the pastoral work of the church—though usually without any formal recognition of this fact from the local church. Occasionally, a husband and wife are installed together as co-pastors. There seems to have been little or no substantial increase in either the number of women ministers or, in most denominations at least, their use in the pastorate since 1940, in spite of the grave lack of ministers and thousands of churches vacant or provided only with a "supply." Yet women in other profes-

[41] This figure is larger than we can account for. The census definition reads: "clergyman . . . professional and kindred."

sions found the discrimination against them relaxed and doors open that had always been closed hitherto.

There were reported to be 38 Northern Baptist women pastors in 1947. In that year about 283 names could be recognized as women's in the Disciple directory of ministers, but only 39 were pastors. Probably the largest number of women pastors are in the Pentecostal and Holiness groups where there seems to be far less sex prejudice. The largest number of ordained women in the better known denominations are undoubtedly Methodists, but the total is not known. Ordained local preachers, who are supply pastors, perform all the functions of the minister. But since they are not members of Conference they have no right to a church or to a pension. The Methodist Discipline recognizes the "local ministry" and the "traveling ministry." The form of ordination is the same for both. The present tendency on the part of Methodist officials seems to be to regard women local preachers as "ordained lay women, . . . in no sense ministers." Yet, a goodly number have proved their right to the latter title. There are about 200 Methodist women serving as "supply pastors," according to a report to the 1948 General Conference. The arguments most often heard against full clergy rights are the difficulty of moving married women from one church to another and the fear of "a flood" of women whom the churches would not accept. There were about 175 ordained Congregational women ministers in 1946. Of these, 23 were in charge of churches. Ten ordained women from other denominations and 22 licentiates and students were also serving as pastors.[42] Some were assistant pastors or directors of religious education. In the last three or four years, there has been a decided increase in the number of Congregational women ordained but very few of these are in the pastorate, it seems.

The Church of the Brethren has 78 "sisters," as women licensed to preach are called. The Church of God (with headquarters in Queens Village, New York) reports that it has 400 women licensed to preach, but not ordained, about a third of its total number of ministers.

The American Women Ministers Association, of which the Reverend Edna M. Fellows, Lake Charles, Iowa, is general secretary, brings together for fellowship about 200 women of 16 denominations in active

[42] A more recent study reports 233 ordained or licensed Congregational Christian women ministers. Of these, 84 are pastors. "Our Women Ministers." By Thomas Alfred Tripp. *Advance,* January, 1949.

membership. Its members are not all ordained—though the majority are. Some of them belong to denominations that do not ordain women, yet they preach with great power. The association publishes the *Woman's Pulpit.*

Opportunities for Women Pastors

The great majority of women pastors, whatever their denomination, are, it seems, to be found in very small churches in small towns or rural areas, for the excellent reason that these churches know that they cannot be "choosy" about their ministers. To be sure, a very occasional church has decided that it actually prefers a woman. In many ways the pastorate is a peculiarly hard field for women since their voices are naturally light and less easily heard in public speaking. Especially in rural areas, they must often be housekeeper as well as pastor. And parish work may involve many hours of travel at all hours of day and night. Also, a church with a married male minister hopes to have two workers rather than one. On the other hand, those who have been close to their work often feel that an able, consecrated woman has a "plus" to bring to the pastorate—especially in work with women in the home, children, young people, the sick, and in dealing with family problems.

A Gallup poll found in 1947 that 44 per cent of Protestant church members approved the idea of women ministers and that 52 per cent disapproved. There was no appreciable difference in the attitude of men and women. It is possible that much more prejudice would have been revealed if the question had been asked in terms of a pastor for their own church. However, once an able consecrated woman gets a chance the prejudice often melts away quickly, women ministers report. The average church that has had no experience with such a woman would probably still "ruther have a man that wan't so good" (as an elderly farmer once put it) in preference to even the exceptionally qualified woman. Two very able Congregational women from a single seminary who wanted to enter the pastorate in the early years of the depression and were willing to take "any church, however small," turned to teaching when none could be found. How many capable and consecrated women the church has lost, whether to teaching, the Y.W.C.A., social work, or still other professions, no one can know.

The questionnaire to women students at two large eastern theological seminaries, already referred to, revealed only one person who expected

to enter the pastorate out of a total of 50 replies. Several Presbyterians said they would like to be ordained if their church would change its attitude. One of them commented: "The stratification of jobs and the labelling of 'this for men only' on all but secretarial jobs is disheartening, to say the least."

Some denominational executives in the bodies that ordain women are interested in helping the woman minister to find a church; others are not, even though they have had ample opportunity to know the individual concerned. Some theological seminaries admit women on the same basis as men, some limit sharply the number of women they enroll. Others discourage women from entering the pastorate. Chicago Theological Seminary, a Congregational institution, explains in its catalogue that women are admitted on an equal basis with men, but adds that they are trained for religious education, missionary and social service work, omitting the pastorate. Yale Divinity School announces as its purpose: "To train men for the ministry," and accepts extremely few women.

The Experience of Women Ministers

Only a few women ministers in this country have become widely known. Among the best known are Dr. Georgia Harkness, professor of applied theology at Garrett Biblical Institute; Dr. Hilda L. Ives, until recently lecturer in rural work at Andover-Newton Theological Seminary, and for years a very successful rural minister in Maine; and the Reverend Gertrude Apel, executive secretary of the Washington State Council of Churches.

But there are other women known in smaller circles who have made remarkable records in the pastorate. An outstanding "success story" is that of Mrs. Josephine Huffer, pastor of Trinity Methodist Church, Shelbyville, Indiana. Left a widow (of a Methodist minister) with three little children in 1919, she was licensed to preach in 1920—the first Methodist woman minister in the state—and assigned to a circuit of four little churches that a man had just left. In four years a $10,000 church had been built in the largest of the four charges. Then, in 1924 she was transferred to a little church of only 75 members on the edge of Shelbyville, Indiana. She has been there ever since. She has had the longest pastorate in Indiana Conference and the second longest for any denomination in the state. Today the church plant is valued at nearly $90,000, free of debt. Total active membership in 1946 was 556 ac-

cording to the Conference minutes. This is a striking illustration of the ability of a woman to combine successfully administering a church and bringing up a family.

Another remarkable story is that of the Reverend Bertha Fuller, a Disciple minister and former missionary, now of Little Rock, Arkansas. At 68, theoretically retired, she was asked to take over the pastorate of Clay Chapel, a little church twelve miles out in the country that seemed to be almost dead. The first Sunday of her pastorate there were five people at church, the roof leaked, and the windows were broken. But in a few months she had a real church service and Sunday school. In a very short time it became possible to repair the building and paint the interior.

The Reverend Edna M. Fellows, also an ordained Disciple minister, has built up one little church after another. After about 18 years in one pastorate, she went to a "weak, discouraged" little church in Keosaqua, Iowa, which definitely wanted a woman minister. At the end of five years, it, too, was "thriving and growing and able to support a man and family," and Miss Fellows moved on to build up another at Lake Charles, Iowa. Within two months attendance at the morning service had doubled.

The Reverend Frederica Mitchell of Keene Valley, N. Y., is one of the better known Congregational women ministers. In her twelve-year pastorate in this summer resort community she has built up the church and earned the respect of those who know her work. The records of the Association of Women Ministers make it clear that many others have had long pastorates.

A few women ministers have combined different types of work in their ministry. The Reverend Helen Lyman, pastor of Benson, Vermont, Federated Church, is both an ordained Congregational woman minister and a trained nurse. Thus, she can bring an unusual service to her community. A member of the Association of Women Ministers reported that she earned her living as a music teacher and took charge of a church in addition.

Miss Harriet-Louise Patterson, a Disciple, is minister of the Community Church, Chesterland, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland. The church had been "largely inactive" for several years. Since her first sermon on October 1, 1944, attendance at church service has doubled, the church is out of debt, more money is being contributed to missions than for-

merly, and more than $2,500 has been spent in improvement of the church property.[43]

These incidents, and many more that could be told, show that some women are doing valiant work in difficult places. Mrs. Florence Resor Jardine, a Methodist local elder and supply pastor, writing in *Woman's Pulpit* for October, 1944, described the attitude of the women who stay on in the pastorate regardless of all the difficulties. No one encouraged her to enter the ministry; rather they were shocked at the very idea. The only opportunity she could expect would be "a run-down church which no one else wanted to pastor." There could be no hope for promotion. "It was the compelling, urgent feeling within the innermost depth of my being," she wrote, "that my soul's integrity could not be maintained unless I answered what seemed to me to be God's call to preach." Miss Patterson says in the article already quoted that the woman pastor should be "at least thirty years old and have a broad understanding of the world and human nature. . . . Most important of all, she should find her greatest joy in sharing the spiritual message in her mind and heart with other people." A questionnaire, circulated for this study to members of the Association of Women Ministers, showed that the respondents were in hearty agreement with this statement. Also, "Women are willing to go to the hard places," one commented. Another, who has "put three defunct churches on their feet," felt handicapped as a single woman in providing the needed "leadership in Christian homemaking." Some noted that men and women ministers were both needed in any community since each sex had something special to contribute. Miss Patterson feels that there is "need today, as never before, for sensitive and spiritually-minded women of vision, education, and culture to interpret the new life of women, its spiritual vision as well as its increasing obligations. Here women ministers could be most effective."[44]

It takes an uncommon combination of qualities for anyone to go from one weak church to another with little or no hope of promotion without becoming discouraged. The realization that usually a man minister will take over as soon as a church has been built up is not usually the way to bring out a person's best qualities. Yet it seems to have done so for many women.

[43] "I Am a Woman Minister." By Harriet-Louise Patterson. *Woman's Home Companion,* August, 1947.

[44] *Church Management,* June, 1948.

Many women ministers are highly trained; others are not. Some are in denominations with relatively low standards for ordination. Many women have done remarkable work with relatively poor training. Mrs. Huffer, for instance, finished not only the training prescribed for a Methodist local elder but that for the "traveling ministry" while she was carrying on her church work. The reluctance of many seminaries to train women for church work may have kept some women from securing more adequate preparation. A number of the members of the Association of Women Ministers are widows of ministers. They had had theological training before their marriage, assisted their husbands (usually without formal recognition) and went back into active work after their husbands died. Others have found it possible to combine the home and the pastorate, though of course that is difficult in any profession.

6. SECURITY AND STATUS FOR WOMEN CHURCH EMPLOYES

While the information on the subject is rather scanty, there seems to be but little formal provision for security of tenure, at least for women in local church work. Contracts seem to be unusual. How serious this lack is may depend on the personalities involved.

Retirement Funds for Lay Employes

The different denominations are gradually waking up to their responsibility to provide pensions for their lay employes. At least the following have such a fund in which all those who are in full-time Christian service may be enrolled: Northern Baptist Convention, Congregational Christian, Disciples of Christ, Protestant Episcopal Church, Evangelical and Reformed, Presbyterian Church in the U.S., Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Reformed Church in America, and United Lutheran Church in America. The 1948 Methodist General Conference approved a plan to provide pensions for lay workers (men and women) in local churches. Information for all denominations was not available.

The different plans vary widely both in the way they are handled and the coverage provided. Some have separate pension funds for lay employes; some denominations do not. Some enroll their lay employes as of the day they entered the service of the church, while others

enroll them as of the date they enter the system. One thing most of them seem to have in common: only a small proportion of the women eligible are actually provided for. Dr. Shaver, in his study already quoted, found that only one fifth of the women directors were provided for, though 70 per cent of the men directors were.[45] He comments sharply that this situation has "undoubtedly deterred many earnest young women from entering upon this important type of Christian service in recent years. . . . The absence of old age security for the Protestant Christian teaching group is a reflection on the sincerity of our social gospel emphasis." The Episcopal study found that fewer than a third of the women workers reported that the church had provided any pension for them, and some of them said that the sum was nominal.[46] However, young women from the church training schools are now expected to enter the Church Life Insurance Fund when they graduate. They may arrange with the employing church to have the payment of half the premium included in their contract.

While there seem to be no definite figures available for other denominations, it is probable that most of them have done little if any better. Some have made relatively little effort to push their system on the theory that Federal Social Security would be extended to lay employes of the churches; others have tried to do so with relatively little effect. There are, of course, several sides to the problem. The woman worker may feel that her salary is barely adequate as it is and—especially if she is young—may not feel the need for a retirement pension at the time when such provision should be made. Again, the local church may not realize its responsibility. The very fact that women have a longer life expectancy than men means that more money must be invested to provide an adequate amount later. Deaconesses in the Lutheran bodies and the Evangelical and Reformed Church may live at the Motherhouse when they retire. The 1947 Report of the Congregational Christian Retirement Fund for Lay Workers said that churches that do not provide for the retirement of their lay employes are "sub-standard employers." Even if Social Security is extended to church workers, "public opinion—to say nothing of Christian ethics—will insist" that churches supplement Social Security provisions as many secular corporations do.

[45] Shaver, *op. cit.*, p. 368.

[46] *Report of the Work of the National Committee on the Training and Employment of Women for Work in the Church*, p. 183.

The Status of Women Church Workers

Women in local church work are, it seems, apt to feel that their status in the church is low. The directors of religious education who replied to Dr. Shaver's questionnaire felt strongly that "something should be done to give more clear-cut recognition to the teaching servants of the church." But there was "little unanimity" about the best way to do it. The Episcopal study likewise found that women in church professional work "although conforming to the general heightening of standards, still find themselves in most cases without any professional recognition."[47]

The very fact that salaries are low in comparison with those for similar work in secular jobs makes the question of status much more important. A woman may be willing to accept the lower salary in order to do work to which she is deeply committed. But every additional hurdle to satisfaction on the job may mean a weakened loyalty. One of the replies to the questionnaire that Dr. Shaver sent to religious education organizations and denominational executives in the field offered the comment that the director of religious education "can be anything from the pastor's stenographer to the chore boy around the church building."[48]

The Episcopal study notes that only 34 per cent of their women in "every field of religious education" had a degree higher than an A.B. and that only 24 per cent of those in general missionary work had an A.B. or higher degree. It concludes, therefore, that church work has only a "semi-professional status." This raises serious questions: Will women go into secular work as they gain professional status? Is this part of the situation which makes for the increasing secularization of our society? The study notes the warning of the Report of the Church of England on Woman's Work in the Church that "Modern society will not be won to the Christian allegiance and drawn into fellowship of the church by the activities . . . of one sex alone."

Another difficulty in the situation, the Episcopal study comments, is the fact that the woman worker is "not usually in a position of responsibility nor does she have a share in policy making in the organization. . . . Traditionally, she works with the least privileged and least influential groups in the church. This causes her to be more concerned with the

[47] *The Church a Profession for Women*, p. 8.

[48] Shaver, *op. cit.*, *Religious Education*, January-February, 1947, p. 8.

uninfluential groups and lessens her knowledge of and opportunity to interpret her work to the influential group."

Some of the women who replied to the Episcopal questionnaire felt that "the degree of status an individual had with both clergy and laity depended on the amount of recognition the clergyman accorded her. Some reported that a number of able workers had left church work because of this problem."[49] The clergy, the study found, often seem to feel that women demand "a superior status." In September, 1947, an Episcopal conference on the training of women for church work recommended the organization of an Association of Professional Women Church Workers. Plans for the convening of such a meeting are going forward. The Conference also recommended that a committee be set up to continue study of the curriculum and training for women church workers, looking toward a standard for all training schools. Plans are being made to put this, too, into effect. Another recommendation of the conference looked toward the commissioning of women when they graduate from the training schools and then their licensing by the bishop in whose diocese they work. This would give them added status with both clergy and laity.

The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. provides for the commissioning of lay workers who meet certain standards of training, if they apply for it. Some of them are in local churches, others are home missionaries.

7. PROFESSIONAL STAFFS OF DENOMINATIONAL AND INTERDENOMINATIONAL AGENCIES

Some denominations employ a large executive staff; some of the smaller bodies carry on with only a volunteer staff. Denominational executives were asked to give the number of men and of women in executive positions. Different interpretations of the question gave results that are not always comparable.

It seems probable that six denominations alone[50] employ as many (if not more) women in professional work as all the others put together.

[49] *Report of the Work of the National Committee on the Training and Employment of Women in the Church,* pp. 127-129, 143, 154.

[50] United Lutheran, Congregational Christian, Disciples of Christ, Methodist, Presbyterian, U.S.A., and Protestant Episcopal.

In the United Christian Missionary Society (Disciples of Christ) salaries for men and women secretaries are equal for work of the same rank. Several denominations report that salaries are "supposed to be" equal or that they are working toward that goal. Still others say that salaries for women are from a third to 40 per cent less. Salaries paid by the women's mission boards are sometimes less all along the line—from executives to file clerks. Lower salaries also mean smaller provisions for retirement pensions since these are based on the salaries received.

Interdenominational Agencies

The interdenominational agencies, by and large, have smaller staffs than do the denominational. Consequently, with the exception of the United Council of Church Women with an entirely female staff, there are even fewer opportunities for women professional workers than in denominational boards. There are three women on the executive staff of eleven for the World Council of Churches. Six national interdenominational agencies report that together they employ 64 men executives and 20 women, with one position for a woman vacant. The International Council of Religious Education alone accounts for eight of the women. Usually, the salaries paid women are lower than those for men.

8. RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES OF WOMEN [51]

The year 1945 marked the 100th Anniversary of the restoration of religious life to the Anglican communion. There are now thirteen religious communities of women in the American Protestant Episcopal Church. These members have bound themselves by a vow to God to live their lives in community under a rule according to the three Evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Canon 51 of the Canon Law of the Protestant Episcopal Church gives recognition to Religious Communities and provides certain regulations in regard to them.

In general these communities "may be classified according to three distinct divisions, Active, Contemplative, and Mixed.

"The active life is devoted to various works of mercy inspired by regulated spiritual exercises. The contemplative life has for its primary

[51] For this material we are indebted to Miss Mary Sims of the National Board of the Y.W.C.A.

purpose the worship of God, and the pursuit of such occupations as may tend to the perfecting of this worship. The mixed life is less easily defined. It demands qualities belonging to both the active and the contemplative life."[52]

Eight of the thirteen communities of women in the United States provide for the mixed life, one for the contemplative, and four for the active life. The works done include maintaining schools for girls, both boarding and day schools; convalescent hospitals; the making of altar bread; ecclesiastic embroidery, altar linens, and illuminating; providing for and planning retreats; children's homes; parish and mission work; and lending libraries.

These religious communities are organized on a basis of common responsibility. The Mother Superior is chosen by the professed members of the community, in some communities for terms of three years with the possibility of re-election, in other communities for longer periods. When the sisters have selected one whom they wish to be their Mother Superior, they give to her complete obedience for the time of her term but she must answer to them for the way in which the office is fulfilled and they are free when the time comes to select someone else to succeed her if they believe it is for the best interest of the community to do so.

[52] *Religious Communities in the Episcopal Church and in the Anglican Church in Canada*, 1945, p. 3.

Conclusion

Women are, it is clear, carrying on an enormous variety of activities within the church. Sometimes, to be sure, they are deeply devoted to their local church without much interest even in their own denomination as a whole, to say nothing of the church universal. Many others, however, have caught a vision of the world-wide outreach of the missionary enterprise, of the need for Christian social action, and of the problems of world order. Without their aid the great far-flung missionary work of American churches would have been impossible. The impact of their concern for a better community—at home and abroad—cannot be measured. They are indeed a great force within every church.

Yet certain questions must still be raised. Have all the women of the church been reached, or only certain groups? Is there an effort to attract the unchurched women of the community? Are the women using their abilities to the full in their church work? Such questions cannot be answered about any given community or local church without an intimate knowledge of it. But if the answer is "No," the women of that church are not yet making their full contribution to its life.

One thing is certain. If women's abilities are to be fully used, there must be an opportunity for both the "Marthas" and the "Marys"—one might add, for the "Martha" and the "Mary" in every woman. In the past, churches have tended to have more work for "Martha"—serving church suppers, putting on bazaars, preparing the elements for the Lord's Supper, or sewing for the needy—than there has been for "Mary." As women have become better trained, both in general education and in their own organizations, they are more prepared and more interested in "Mary's" task. But too often the church—local, national, denominational, interdenominational—has not been ready to give them the opportunity to share to any great extent in that aspect of its work. What are the barriers? Sometimes theological concepts, sometimes mere prejudice, sometimes clashing personalities, sometimes custom, so deeply im-

bedded in both men and women that new patterns of thought and action can be established only with great difficulty.

The grave situation in the world today with mounting secularism can only be met by a truly unified church that uses all the talents of all its members, whether clerical or lay, male or female. Perhaps what is really needed is to give new meaning to the basic Protestant concept of the "priesthood of all believers." Then the church would find it possible to educate religiously all its members, young and old, men and women, and to stimulate them to a new vision of their part in all its life and work.

Questions for Study and Action

TRY THESE QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND ACTION ON YOUR GROUP

Part One

1. What are the attitudes in your church about the place of women in the church? Compare your findings with groups in other churches making a similar study.

2. What reasons are given for the place that women occupy in your church—general—biblical—theological? As you consider these three questions compare your own findings with those of the study reported in this booklet.

Part Two

3. Following the categories of Part II, survey the work done by women as volunteers in local denominational organizations.

4. What types of activities do your organizations stress? What other types of work may be needed? What groups are comparatively neglected in your program—newcomers—young women—industrial workers—business and professional women—the aged?

5. In what kinds of tasks do men and women work together in your church—and in the churches of the community? What tasks do they do separately? Why?

Part Three

6. At what points has your relationship with the Council of Church Women affected both the kind of tasks undertaken by the women of your church and their effectiveness?

Part Four

7. After a careful study of Part IV what facts do you need to know about the women employed by your local church and your denomination?

Conclusion

8. How can you help to implement this whole study—through interdenominational and denominational survey groups, discussion and action groups, project committees?

Appendices

APPENDIX A

Note on Method

The data presented here are the result of careful statistical study and research in the literature on the subject. However, in the interest of readability the statistics presented have been kept to a minimum. An effort was made to gather information about the place of women in all Protestant and Orthodox denominations in this country. In order to keep the study within compassable limits major attention has been centered on denominations in the American Committee for the World Council[1] in the fall of 1946 that have national women's agencies. The following questionnaires were sent out:

1. To executives of national interdenominational agencies, asking about their law and practice in regard to the place of women in their agency.

2. To executives of all Protestant and Orthodox denominations in the United States, inquiring about denominational law and practice at the national level.

3. To a sampling of women leaders in local churches of 21 denominations in the American Committee for the World Council of Churches or closely related to it.

4. To a sampling of councils of church women in regard to their activities and their relations with councils of churches in their communities.

5. To the executives of councils of churches with employed leadership on the participation of women in their organizations and their relations with councils of church women.

6. To women students in two eastern theological seminaries about their plans for the future and their attitude toward professional church work as a field for women.

Where necessary, follow-up letters were sent to those who did not respond to the first two questionnaires (though a full response was not secured from the second questionnaire, even so). The others depended on a single letter.

The questionnaires to councils of church women were sent out for us by the United Council of Church Women; those to women in local churches by the women's national denominational agencies; the others by the committee for

[1] With the addition of two bodies not members of the World Council but closely related to it.

the study. About 20,500 were distributed. The questionnaire to women in local churches accounted for the largest number, about 19,500. The numbers were determined on the basis of the proportion of membership of each denomination in the total Protestant membership in the American Committee for the World Council. There was a remarkable response to these questionnaires, especially to the one to women leaders in local churches. Approximately 27 per cent of all those sent out were returned.

Through the courtesy of the American Association of Women Ministers it was possible to read through the applications of their members—a primary source for information about the training and experience of women ministers. The association also circulated a questionnaire to its members that was very helpful.

Many other sources of data have been used—books, magazine articles, newspaper items, the "women's page" of denominational papers, attendance at conferences, conversations with both men and women on the subject. All these have thrown light on different aspects of the question.

The following denominational agencies distributed the questionnaire to women leaders in local churches for us:

National Committee on Women's Work, Northern Baptist Convention

Women's Auxiliary Convention, National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.

Woman's National Baptist Convention, National Baptist Convention of America

Women's Society, Seventh Day Baptists

National Council of Women's Work, Church of the Brethren

National Fellowship of Congregational Christian Women, Congregational Christian Churches

United Christian Missionary Society, Disciples of Christ

Women's Guild, Evangelical and Reformed Church

Department of Women's Service, Board of Missions, Evangelical United Brethren Church

Women's Missionary Union of Friends in America, Five Years' Meeting

Woman's Missionary Society, Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod of North America

Women's Missionary Society, United Lutheran Church

Women's Society of Christian Service, The Methodist Church

Women's Missionary Society, African Methodist Episcopal Church

Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society, African Methodist Episcopal Church

Board of Women's Connectional Council, Colored Methodist Episcopal Church

Committee for Woman's Work, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.

National Council of Women's Organizations, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

Women's General Missionary Society, United Presbyterian Church of North America

National Woman's Auxiliary, Protestant Episcopal Church

Coordinator of Women's Work, Reformed Church in America

APPENDIX B

Legal Status of Women in the Denominations

Denomination	*Service on Local Church Boards*	*Highest Denominational Body*	*Ministers* ORDAINED	LICENSED
ADVENTIST BODIES				
Advent Christian Church	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Life and Advent Union	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Seventh Day Adventists[1]	Yes	Yes	Yes	
ASSEMBLIES OF GOD[1]	Yes	Yes	Yes	
BAPTIST BODIES				
Northern Baptist Convention	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Southern Baptist Convention	No	Yes	No	
National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.	Yes	Yes	No	
National Baptist Convention of America	Yes[1]	Yes	No	
Christian Unity Baptist Association	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Free Will Baptists[1]	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Regular Baptists (O.S.)	No bodies	Yes	No	
Seventh Day Baptists	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Seventh Day Baptists (German)[1]	Yes	Yes	No	
United American Free Will Baptist Church	Yes	Yes	No	
BRETHREN BODIES				
Brethren Church[1]	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Church of the Brethren	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Old German Baptist Brethren	Yes	No	No	
Plymouth Brethren	No	None	No	
Brethren in Christ[1]	No	No	No	
Old Order or Yorker Brethren[1]	——	——	No	
CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE	Yes	Yes	No	
CHRIST'S SANCTIFIED HOLY CHURCH	Yes	Yes	Yes	

[1] Information from other sources than the questionnaire to denominations.

Denomination	*Service on Local Church Boards*	*Highest Denominational Body*	*Ministers* ORDAINED	LICENSED
CHURCHES OF GOD				
Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.)	No	No	No	Yes
Church of God (Queens Village)	——	Yes	No	Yes
Church of God in Christ	Yes	Yes	No	
CHURCH OF REVELATION	Yes	Yes	Yes	
CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE[1]	Yes	Yes	Yes	
CHURCHES OF GOD IN N.A.				
GENERAL ELDERSHIP	Yes	Yes	Yes	
CHURCHES OF THE NEW JERUSALEM				
General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the U.S.A.	Yes	Yes	No	
General Church of the New Jerusalem	None ever elected	Yes	No	
CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES	Yes	Yes	Yes	
CONGREGATIONAL HOLINESS CHURCH	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST	Yes	Yes	Yes	
EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCHES				
American Holy Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Eastern Church	Yes	Yes	No	
Apostolic Episcopal Church	No	No	No	
Bulgarian Orthodox Church[1]	No	No	No	
Greek Orthodox Church[1]	No	No	No	
Holy Orthodox Church in America	Yes	Yes	No	
Roumanian Orthodox Church	No	No	No	
Russian Orthodox Church[1]	No	No	No	
Serbian Orthodox Church[1]	No	No	No	
Syrian Antiochian Orthodox Church	No	No	No	
Ukrainian Orthodox Church[1]	No	No	No	
EVANGELICAL AND REFORMED CHURCH	Yes	Yes	Yes	
EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH	Yes	Yes	No	
EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA	Yes	Yes	No	
EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH	Yes	Yes	No	
EVANGELISTIC ASSOCIATIONS				
Apostolic Christian (Nazarean)	——	No	No	
Christian Congregation	Yes	Yes	Yes	

[1] Information from other sources than the questionnaire to denominations.

Denomination	*Service on Local Church Boards*	*Highest Denominational Body*	*Ministers* ORDAINED	LICENSED
Church of God as Organized by Christ[1]	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Hephzibah Faith Missionary Assn.	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Missionary Church Association	Yes	Yes	No	
FRIENDS, RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF[2]				
Primitive Friends	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Conservative Friends	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Friends General Conference	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Five Years' Meeting	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting	Yes	Yes	Yes	
HOLINESS CHURCH OF GOD, INC.	Yes	Yes	Yes	
LUTHERAN BODIES				
American Lutheran Church	Yes	Yes	No	
Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod	No	Yes	No	
Evangelical Lutheran Church[1]	Yes	No	No	
Lutheran Free Church	Yes	Yes	No	
United Evangelical Lutheran Church	Yes	Yes	No	
Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri	No	No	No	
Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin	No	No	No	
Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church	No	No	No	
Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church	No	No	No	
United Lutheran Church	Yes	Yes	No	
Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church	Yes	Yes	No	
Protestant Conference	No	No	No	
MENNONITE BODIES				
Defenseless Mennonite Conference	Yes	Yes	Yes	
General Conference of the Mennonite Church	Yes	Yes	No	
Hutterian Brethren	No	No	No	
Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church of N.A.	No	No	No	
Mennonite Brethren in Christ	None ever elected	Yes	No	Yes[3]
Mennonite Church	No	No	No	

[1] Information from other sources than the questionnaire to denominations.
[2] Friends meetings "recognize" their ministers.
[3] "Approved Ministering Sisters."

Denomination	*Service on Local Church Boards*	*Highest Denominational Body*	*Ministers* ORDAINED	LICENSED
Mennonite Kleinegemeinde	No	No	No	
Old Order Mennonites	No	No	No	
Stauffer Mennonite Church	No	No	No	
METHODIST BODIES				
African Methodist Episcopal Church[1]	Yes	Yes	Yes[4]	
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church[1]	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Colored Methodist Episcopal Church[1]	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
The Methodist Church	Yes	Yes	Yes[5]	
Primitive Methodist Church	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Reformed Zion Union Apostolic Church	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America	Yes	Yes	Yes	
MORAVIAN BODIES				
Bohemian & Moravian Brethren Church	Yes	Yes	No	
Evangelical Unity of Czech-Moravian Brethren of N.A.	No	No	No	
Moravian Church (Northern Province)	Yes	Yes	No	
NEW APOSTOLIC CHURCH OF N.A.	No	No	No	
PENTECOSTAL BODIES				
International Pentecostal Assemblies	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Pentecostal Church of God	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Pentecostal Fire Baptized Holiness Church	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
POLISH NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH	Yes	Yes	No	
PRESBYTERIAN BODIES				
Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, General Synod	No	No	No	
Colored Cumberland Presbyterian Church[1]	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Cumberland Presbyterian Church	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Presbyterian Church in U.S.	No	No	No	
Presbyterian Church in U.S.A.	Yes	Yes	No	

[1] Information from other sources than the questionnaire to denominations.

[4] Ordained as "local deacons," 1948 General Conference.

[5] Ordained as "local deacons" and "local elders"; may serve as "accepted supply pastors" but cannot be members of Conference.

Denomination	*Service on Local Church Boards*	*Highest Denominational Body*	*Ministers* ORDAINED	LICENSED
Reformed Presbyterian Church of N.A. (Covenanter)	No	No	No	
United Presbyterian Church	No[6]	No	No	
PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH	[7]	No[8]	No	
REFORMED BODIES				
Christian Reformed[1]	No	No	No	
Reformed Church in America	No	No	No	
REFORMED EPISCOPAL CHURCH	Yes	Yes	No	
SALVATION ARMY[9]	Yes	Yes	Yes	
UNITARIAN CHURCHES	Yes	Yes	Yes	
UNITED BRETHREN IN CHRIST (O.C.)[1]	Yes	Yes	Yes	
UNITED CHRISTIAN CHURCH	No	No	No	
UNITED HOLY CHURCH OF AMERICA	Yes	Yes	Yes	
UNIVERSALIST CHURCH	Yes	Yes	Yes	

Of 105 denominations for which information could be secured denominational law and practice in 71 permit women to serve on all local church boards, but in 33 they do not. In one it varies by dioceses. In 110 denominations 75 permit women to serve in the highest denominational body, 35 do not. Forty-one denominations ordain women ministers, seven license but do not ordain them, and 63 do neither.

[1] Information from other sources than the questionnaire to denominations.
[6] Deacons and trustees, not elders.
[7] In some dioceses, not in all.
[8] One woman was seated in 1946; the question would have to be raised again.
[9] Women are commissioned as Salvation Army officers.

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire on the Life and Work of Women in the Church sent to Officers of Women's Organizations in Local Churches

I. Please list the women's organizations in your local church.

II. Please check the major activities of each organization in the list below:
   1. Mission study
   2. Work for the denominational home mission program
   3. Work for the denominational foreign mission program
   4. Money raising
   5. Community service
      a. as a church body
      b. through community agencies
   6. Other (Please be specific)

III. Are women eligible to serve on the governing boards of your local church? Yes..... No.....

IV. The several types of governing bodies in *local churches* in the different denominations included in this questionnaire are listed below.
   1. Please check those found in *your* local church.
   2. Please give the number of men members and of women members of each one checked.

	Number of men	*Number of women*
Church Cabinet		
Church Committee		
Church Council		
Class leaders		
Consistory		
Deacons (do not include deaconesses)		
Elders		
Monthly Meeting		
Official Board		
Parish Council		

	Number of men	*Number of women*
Session		
Stewards		
Trustees		
Vestry		
Wardens		

V. What changes have there been since 1940?
   1. Are there more women on these boards? Fewer? No change?
   2. Do the women serving participate—More effectively? Less so? No change?

VI. Does your church hold congregational meetings?
Very seldom? Once a year? Frequently?

VII. Do the women participate in these meetings?
More freely than in 1940? Less so? No change?

VIII. Please check the statement below which most nearly represents *your* opinion in regard to women serving on church boards:
   1. Serving on governing boards of the church is a man's job.
   2. Women may well serve on the less important boards but not on the more important.
   3. Exceptionally able women should have the opportunity to serve on any boards for which they are fitted.
   4. All such boards should include some women.

IX. Have you served on any of these boards? Yes ..... No .....

X. If so, was it worth while? Disappointing?

XI. What new thinking is emerging in your group on this question?

XII. Please offer any comment you may care to on the whole question.

Name

Address

Communion

Name of church
(Your name will not be used.)

January, 1947